

SEPTEMBER 1987

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The Atlantic

KATIE LEISHMAN ON AIDS AND INSECTS / JAMES FALLOWS ON JAPAN

**GARRISON
KEILLOR**

**LEAVING
HOME**

**STORIES FROM
LAKE WOBEGON**

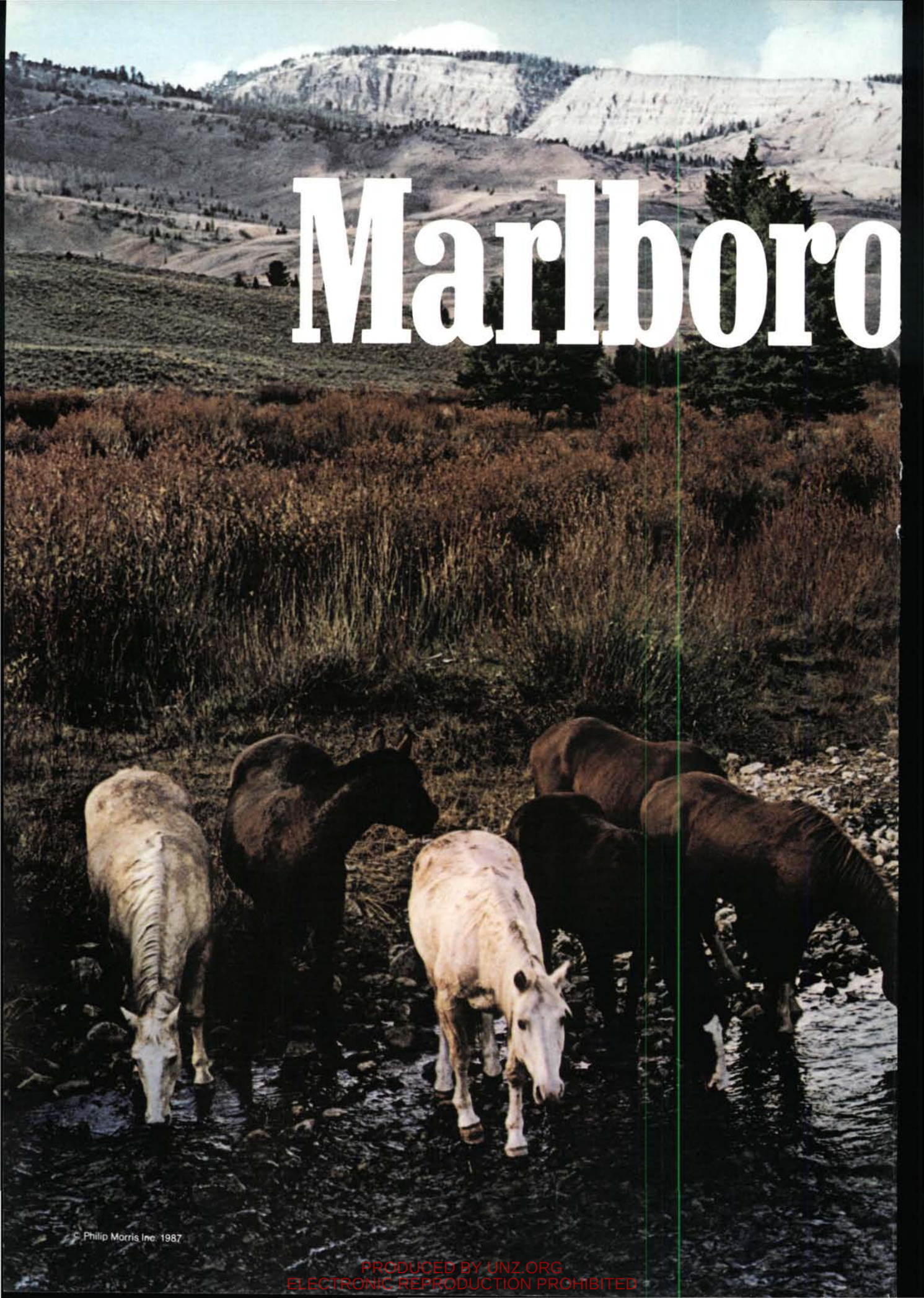
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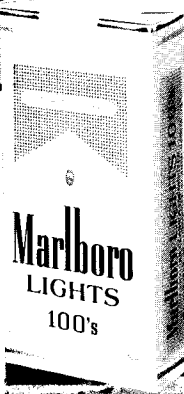
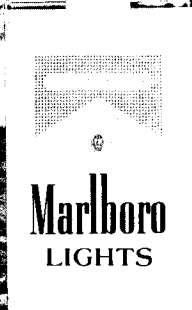
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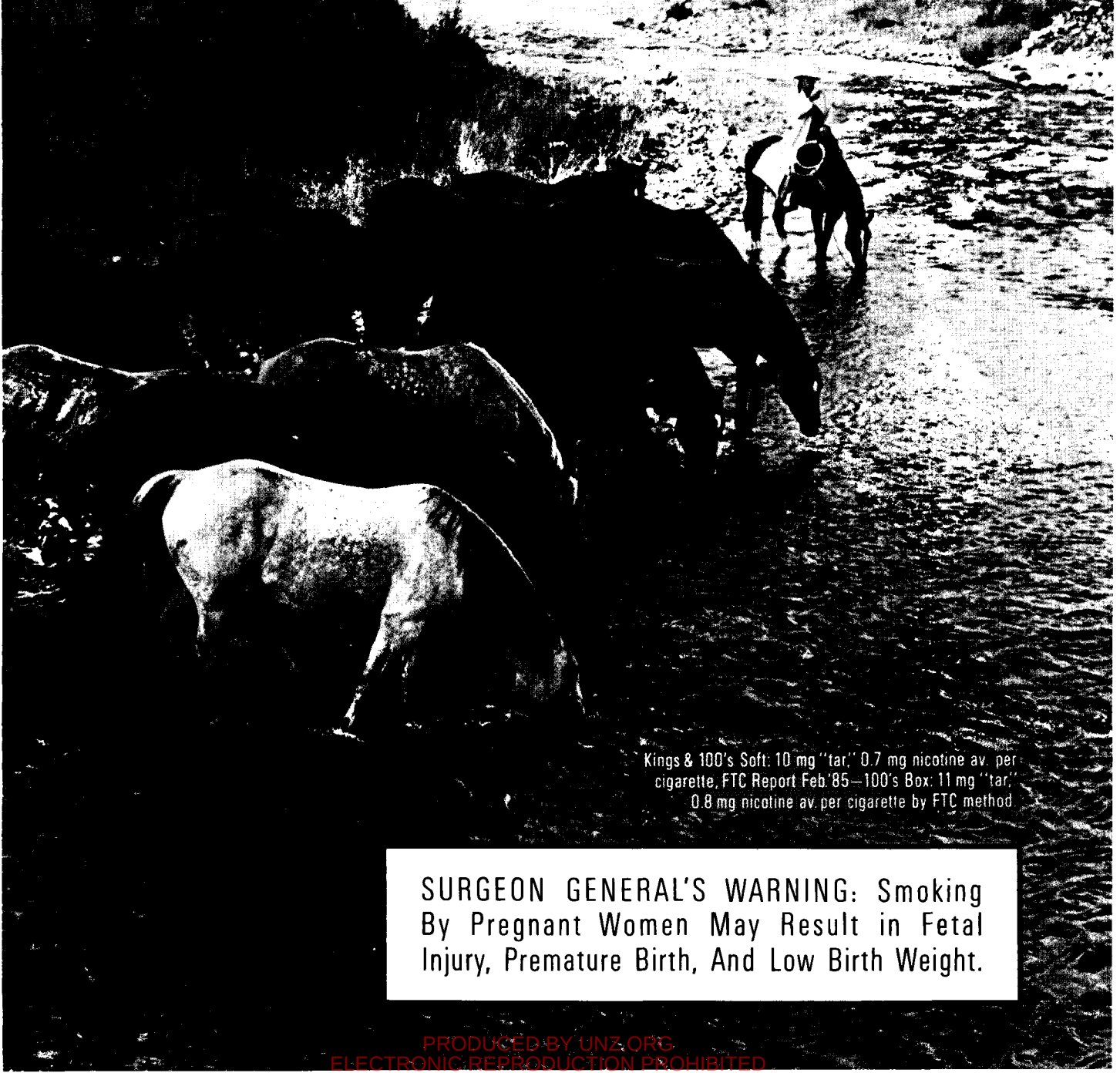
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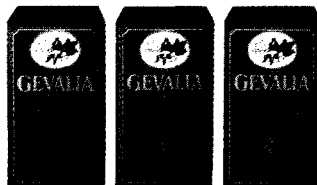
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GEVALIA KAFFE A SWEDISH OBSESSION

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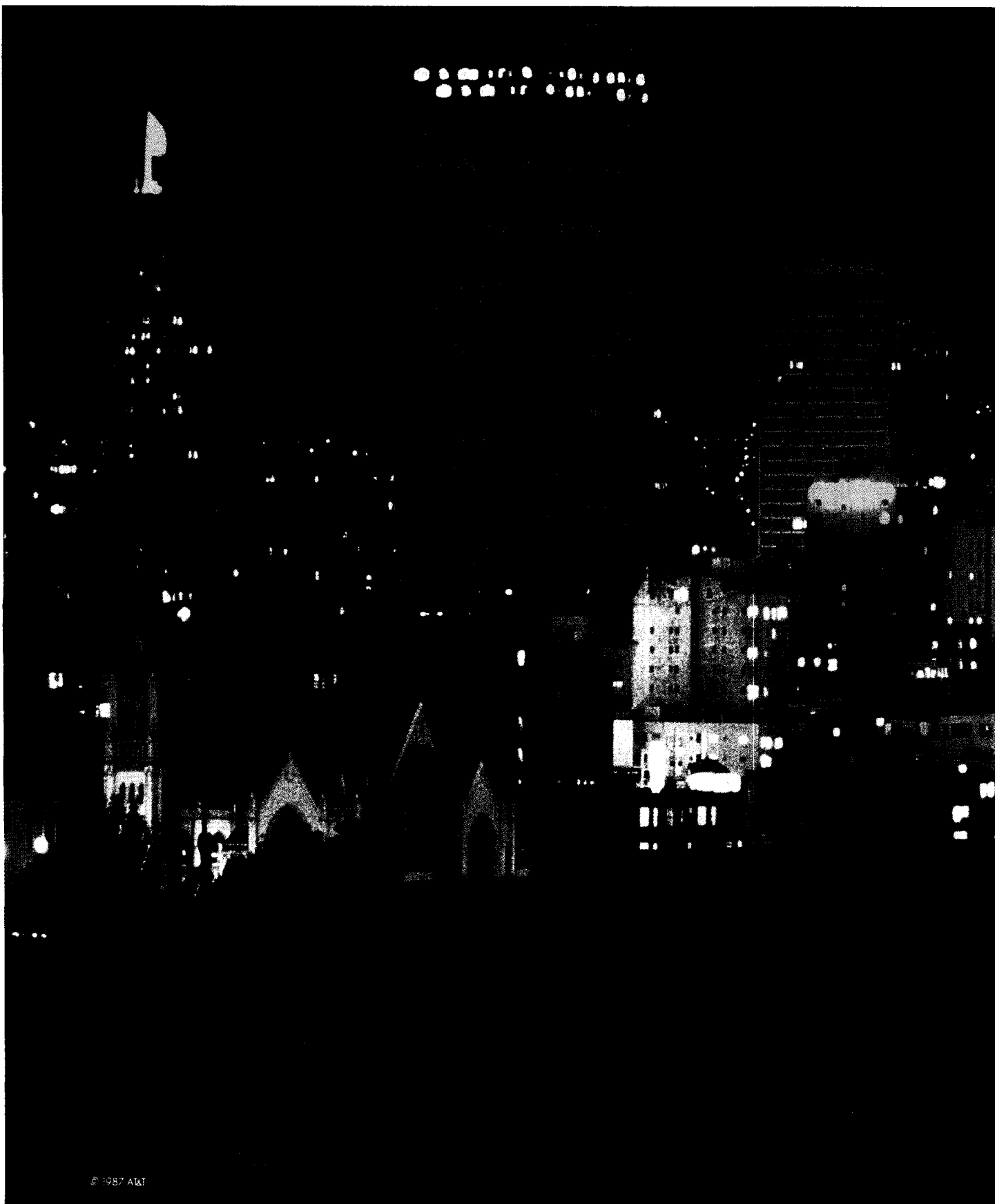
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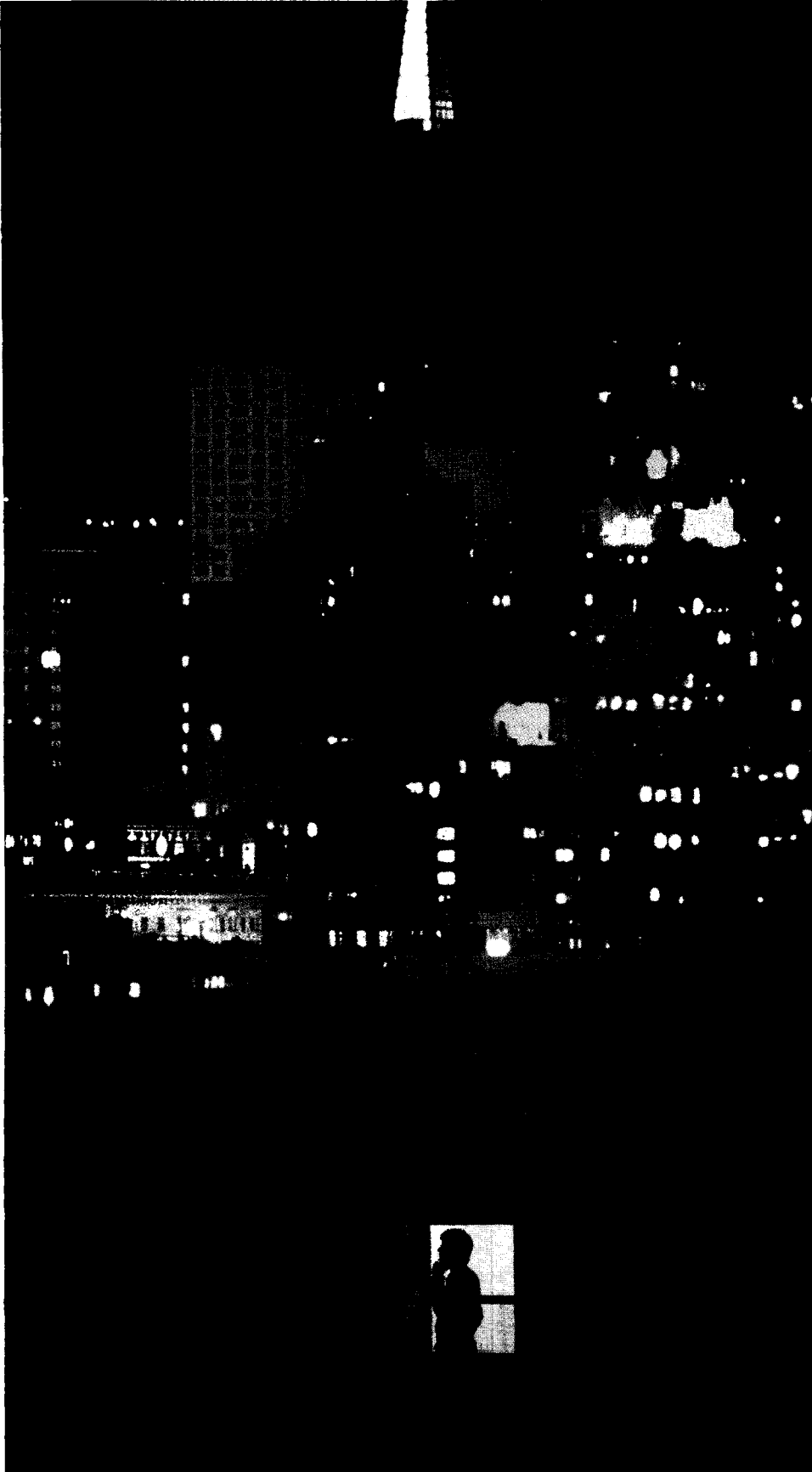


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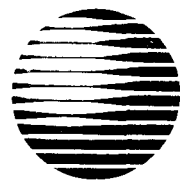
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WELFARE REFORM

David Whitman's article "The Key to Welfare Reform" (June *Atlantic*) was on the mark in regard to the failings of past and current reform projects such as JTPA. However, Whitman missed a major issue in the release of chronic welfare mothers from the rolls: child care. While he mentions the loss of Medicare coverage as a crisis that may bring about a return to welfare cycles, he touches only briefly on child care, as an often-omitted funding consideration.

In fact, an overall lack of adequate, low-cost child care has been and is causing major disruptions and slowdowns in the employment patterns of all mothers, not just those on AFDC. Whitman writes that job-ready candidates deterred by a loss of medical coverage and minimum-wage earners who "dribble out" of work programs are the current targets of reform. His statement that "no one actually knows how to reach hard-core welfare mothers on a broad scale" seems ludicrous. Large-scale campaigns require a common denominator, which in this instance is small children needing financial support in order to live decent lives. The trouble with former programs has been that funding has been aimed at training women for full-time jobs in service-sector positions that seldom provide medical coverage or enough money to pay for adequate child care. These exercises only affirm for most women the wisdom of staying on relief to ensure the well-being of their kids.

The solution, then, seems to be a comprehensive low-cost child-care program for AFDC mothers *and* non-recipient low-income families. If such a program were established nationally and based on a realistic sliding scale of ability to pay, I believe a marked decrease in chronic recipients would occur within a year. Anything less requires a woman to weigh her dignity against the best interests of her children. As history shows, and as it should, the interests of her children will always be sovereign.

CYNTHIA LYONS
Ishpeming, Mich.

In the context of a market economy, what AFDC really does is to turn mothering into a paid job. That mother-

ing should be a low-paid and demeaning job is unfortunate, but if we made it a high-paid and glamorous job, it would be too attractive and too many women would do it.

David Whitman mentions that two welfare-reduction programs currently proposed in Washington include provisions that shorten the period during which any one child can qualify his or her mother for welfare. In my opinion, the response of the "chronic" welfare recipients these programs are designed to disqualify will simply be to bear children more frequently.

I cast no aspersions on those who choose welfare mothering as a career. The alternatives for them are apparently so unattractive that continuous child-bearing is a rational choice. If there is some reason why society cannot tolerate this situation, a strong incentive for birth control would be to limit the number of children who can qualify any one mother for support. Two children in a lifetime is all that middle-class women can afford nowadays. If welfare mothers are not similarly constrained, we must admit that we are paying them to do society's dirty work, and stop criticizing them for doing it.

MIMI GERSTELL
Winthrop, Mass.

To reduce the number of single mothers on welfare, we need to reduce the number of single mothers. To do this, we need to put a health clinic able to dispense contraceptives in every high school, as a few school districts have done. We also need to get serious about collecting child support from fathers, whether or not they were ever married to the mothers, and however low their own income.

MICHAEL KOVARI
Inglewood, Calif.

David Whitman does an admirable job of identifying one of the root causes of the intractability of the welfare problem—namely the hard-core welfare population. Unfortunately, his analysis of how current and proposed employment and training programs affect this problem deals with only one dimension of a multifaceted dilemma. For instance, while he mentions "welfare mothers"

more than a dozen times in his article, not once does he discuss the absent father who helped create the welfare mother in the first place. Stronger federal support laws and better enforcement of those laws have made a difference in states like Pennsylvania and Michigan, but much more can be accomplished in this area. This can make a significant difference in the final cost of AFDC.

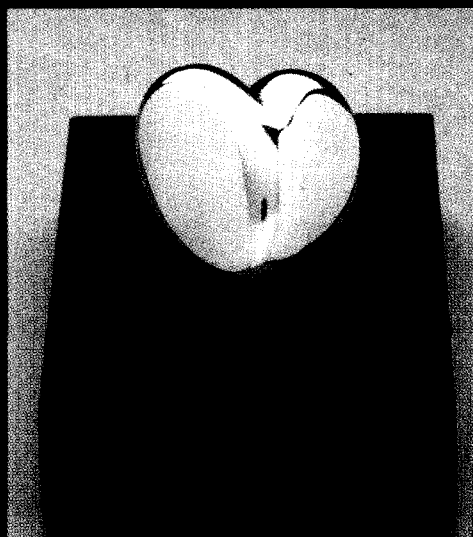
GLENN DUERR
Allentown, Pa.

David Whitman replies:

Long ago I learned the first axiom of successful welfare reform: Whatever sounds logical is probably wrong. That precept has been demonstrated repeatedly (first in the negative income tax experiments of the 1960s) and is shown again in the hopeful solutions to the welfare mess proposed in these letters. One night, for example, wish to agree with Cynthia Lyons that welfare mothers would work if only they were guaranteed child care. In fact most welfare mothers either turn down or ignore existing day-care subsidies. Nationwide, only one percent of the AFDC caseload takes advantage of the opportunity to write off \$160 a month in child-care expenses (available once a recipient starts a new job). Similarly, participants in work programs administered under the Job Training and Partnership Act, which covers up to 100 percent of a welfare mother's day-care expenses, hardly ever use the day-care allotment. In Los Angeles nearly \$2 million in child-care funds available to women enrolled in job training went unused in fiscal year 1984-1985.

Contrary to Ms. Lyons's assumption that child care is a problem for "all mothers," poor women often leave their children with a relative or a neighbor. Unlike middle-class mothers who work, welfare mothers are likely to have fairly close ties to their neighborhood. Of course, day care is an obstacle for some women on welfare, and it will become a more pressing problem as job programs expand to include mothers with younger children, which is why I questioned whether the Administration had set aside enough money in its work program for child care. To suggest, however, that free child care would markedly reduce the welfare rolls is bunk.

Other myths: Mimi Gerstell says that women will have more children if they are forced to work when their children



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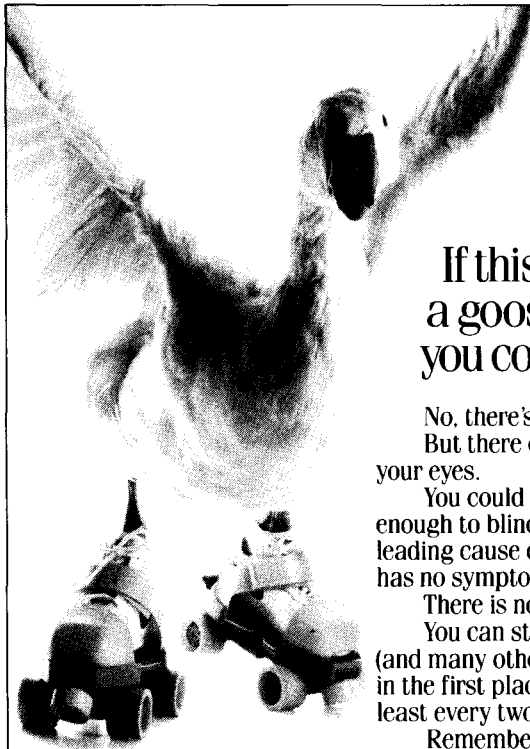
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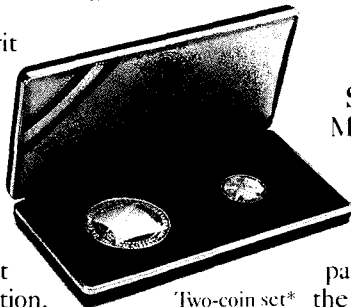


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are, say, three, rather than six (the current limit). Little or no evidence supports the oft-repeated notion that women have babies to stay on welfare. On the contrary, the size of welfare families has dropped dramatically since 1970. In fact, three out of four AFDC families in 1984 had no more than two children, the size of the middle-class family described by Ms. Gerstell.

Michael Kovari says that school clinics that dispense contraceptives would reduce welfare use. That's unlikely. So far, no one knows whether the existing clinics reduce the number of pregnancies, and no available data show that they cut welfare dependence. A slew of programs to prevent teenage pregnancy have generally failed to reduce the rolls.

Finally, Glenn Duerr writes that better child-support enforcement can make a significant difference in reducing AFDC costs. He's right that successful welfare reform must involve more than just work programs, and I'm all for making absent fathers pay more child support. But, again, child-support-enforcement practices have been overhauled in recent years (most recently in 1984) and have not saved much AFDC money. In 1979 child-support collections recovered 5.6 percent of AFDC payments. By 1985, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the figure had climbed to only 7.3 percent. Pennsylvania and Michigan, the two exemplary states cited by Duerr, are barely above the national average. Child-support payments cover 10.5 percent of AFDC costs in Pennsylvania and 12.8 percent in Michigan. I come back to the main point of my article: the job programs proposed by the President and by leading Democrats won't do much to cut the welfare rolls. Nor will the panaceas laid out in the letters above.

TECHNO-NATIONALISM

Although Robert Reich is correct in his condemnation of "Japan-bashing" through the utilization of tariffs and quotas ("The Rise of Techno-Nationalism," May *Atlantic*), he is naive to assume that the unrestricted sharing of our technology coupled with the subsidization of foreign companies will be good for the American or the world economy. Unless the United States can repatriate some, not all, of the manufacturing capabilities, in such areas as semiconductors and machine tools, that it has lost

over the past decade to foreign competition, it will continue to lose both the theoretical and the practical ability to innovate. Innovation is the ultimate product of need. If the United States does not maintain an adequate industrial base, there will be a continually diminished call for American technology, because the nations doing the manufacturing will simply be relying on their own cheaper and ultimately more applicable innovations to sustain their industry. Japanese, Korean, West German, and French companies already do most of their primary, and thus most demanding, research at home and only their basic assembly-line manufacturing abroad.

Robert Reich is wrong in assuming that future technological innovation will be shared in both its inception and its distribution among the trading nations of the world. Advances will increasingly be the domain of the industrialized countries that are ready and willing to use them, which means that a de-industrializing American economy will be excluded from the worldwide technical oligopoly. Reich's argument is exemplary of the many economist-minded thinkers (who make up a thriving majority in the White House) who feel that markets should be left to clear on their own. He argues that the fault of the American industrial decline lies with American engineers and executives. Although this might be partly true, it does not recognize and appreciate the fundamental role that government policies and institutions can and will have in any economy.

If the United States, the single largest marketplace in the world, is to remain open, it must also remain competitive. This can be accomplished only through activist policies aimed at a revitalization of American industry. Watching these already decrepit bastions of high American living standards disappear while we invest in someone else's good fortune will only lead to international bitterness and mistrust.

GORDON CAPLAN
Ithaca, N.Y.

Robert Reich wants me to believe that, given the chance, a small group of people could make all the decisions concerning our nation's economic progress. The millions of business decisions made every day cannot be made by one person or group of persons, nor should they be. All of the information necessary for efficient investment, production, or research decisions is con-

tained in the price system. By allowing markets to work efficiently, our country became a world leader. Once the government steps in, market mechanisms deteriorate, resulting in a declining economy steeped in old technology and producing no new jobs. The United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s is an excellent example of this phenomenon.

Reich has no faith in the ability of American workers, management, or markets. However, I believe that he should have less faith in the ability of those not directly involved in the market to make decisions based on some preconceived notion of the way the world should look. If Reich believes that some group of people will know which industries are necessary for U.S. growth, let him invest his own money in them.

BRIAN S. WESBURY
Chicago, Ill.

Congratulations to Robert Reich for a timely summary of the crisis in the electronics industry. "The Rise of Techno-Nationalism" is strongest when examining the pitfalls of nationalistic approaches to problems that develop on global terrain. But Reich prescribes an antidote that will likely fare as poorly as those he discounts.

He proposes "subsidized loans, loan guarantees, or matching grants" to encourage "production in America" by U.S. or foreign technology firms. Essentially similar solutions have been tried and found wanting. The federal government has seeded the electronics industry with *hundreds of billions* of dollars in subsidies since the Second World War, mainly in the form of cost-plus military contracts (approaching \$60 billion a year) and R&D funding (several more billions), that now constitute the single largest outlay for electronics and related goods. Much of the military subsidy requires contractors to employ American citizens, thus meeting the author's objective of keeping jobs in America. To this largesse we must add the untold millions awarded electronics firms by municipal, county, and state governments for the favor of locating plants, however temporarily, in American towns. U.S. electronics firms have taken full advantage of these subsidies, while, as Reich is well aware, exporting factories and jobs to the lands of the lowest-paid labor forces in the world. Despite this considerable assistance, American electronics firms have languished, to the point of losing much of their subsidized

military markets to Japanese, Asian, and European firms. Reich disavows this enlightening history of subsidies to the electronics industry, noting only that since the government has been "willing to subsidize business indirectly," there is precedent for taking up his proposal. What he fails to do is explain why his subsidy program should work any better than previous or existing ones.

DENNIS HAYES
San Francisco, Calif.

Robert B. Reich replies:

I warned that my proposal—to subsidize high-tech firms, regardless of their putative nationality, in order that they might undertake advanced manufacturing in the United States—would inspire indignation from both the left and the right. Now come Messrs. Caplan, Wesbury, and Hayes to prove me right.

Mr. Caplan, arguing that we should never share our technology with foreigners, wants more government intervention than I propose. He suffers from the neo-mercantile delusions that "our" technology can be differentiated from "theirs" and that other nations' econom-

ic gains must come at our expense. Mr. Wesbury wants less government intervention than I propose. He succumbs to the opposing fiction, advanced by nineteenth-century English economists and put to rest by the late-twentieth-century Japanese, that a free market in international trade always rewards nations according to their innate comparative advantage.

Mr. Hayes makes the valuable point that to throw subsidies in the direction of high-tech companies, as we have done in the past, is hardly adequate. We must condition such largesse upon the willingness of those companies to invest in their employees—undertaking complex production in the United States, enhancing American workers' technological competence, and thus improving our overall productivity and capacity to innovate.

IN HARM'S WAY, CONT.

Jack Beatty's incisive analysis of the Navy's maritime strategy ("In Harm's Way," *May Atlantic*) properly focuses on

the foolhardiness of risking carriers in the Barents Sea, the ineffectiveness of harassing raids around the periphery of the USSR, and the suicidal recklessness of a campaign to destroy Soviet sea-based nuclear deterrent forces. There are, however, considerable theoretical and historical precedents for the first two objectives of this strategy, and both might prove attainable if they are properly approached.

During the First World War, surface vessels attacked U-boat bases with mixed success. The same results accompanied bombing missions against Nazi submarine pens of the Second World War (targets given, incidentally, the Allies' highest priority). While both wars saw the U-boats ultimately defeated by the convoy system, surface and air raids did contribute significantly to slowing the submarine onslaught. The principle of "forward defense" is not new, and it merits careful review as the Soviet submarine threat is assessed. Perhaps air- or sub-launched cruise missiles would be more cost-effective than carriers in disrupting Soviet naval operations in the Kola.

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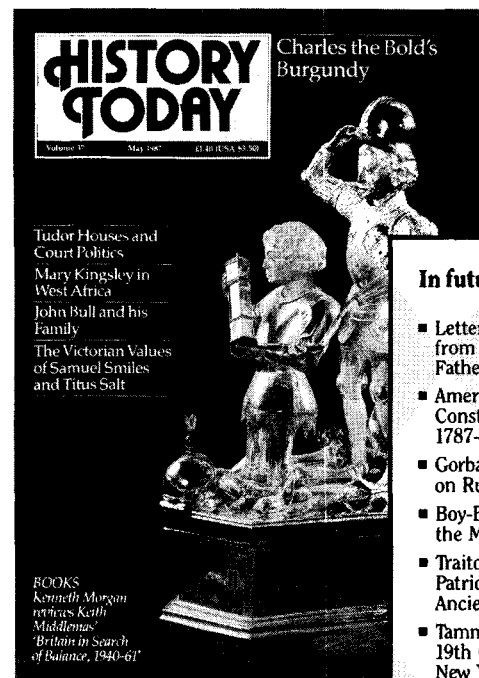
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The second aspect of the maritime strategy, peripheral warfare, has been practiced by sea powers from the time of ancient Athens up through that of the British Empire. It is generally effective when used against a continental power with holdings that could be isolated by sea power and subjected to rapid attrition. The USSR maintains little more than naval bases at distant points, and peripheral warfare would be useful only if Soviet allies joined the war against NATO. Even then, NATO would likely need all available forces to stem the tide of invasion in Europe. Thus, this aspect of the maritime strategy might have the perverse effect of fatally weakening the conventional defense of Western Europe.

The notion of chasing down Soviet SSBNs is counterproductive to the goal of defeating a conventional invasion of Europe. Such a policy tempts the other side to "use or lose" its nuclear deterrent. It has no place in a strategy for protracted conventional warfare.

The maritime strategy, flawed as it may in large part be, is a tacit admission that nuclear weapons can no longer de-

ter conventional aggression, and perhaps never should have been considered capable of doing so.

JOHN ARQUILLA
Pacifica, Calif.

Readers of Jack Beatty's challenging "In Harm's Way" should be aware that he may have been misled by the bias underlying the academic criticisms he cites of the U.S. Navy's maritime strategy. The intellectual bias of these critics is every bit as powerful, although more subtle, than the "motivated bias" ascribed to the strategy's uniformed supporters.

Messrs. Mearsheimer, Posen, Van Evera, and Snyder clearly believe in the analogy between the failure of offensive strategy on land in the First World War and its anticipated failure at sea in the third world war. But this analogy is not valid for two reasons. First, war at sea differs fundamentally from war on land in that the offensive is almost always stronger than the defensive, both tactically and strategically. Second, there is no historical example of a defensive naval strategy avoiding defeat, let alone se-

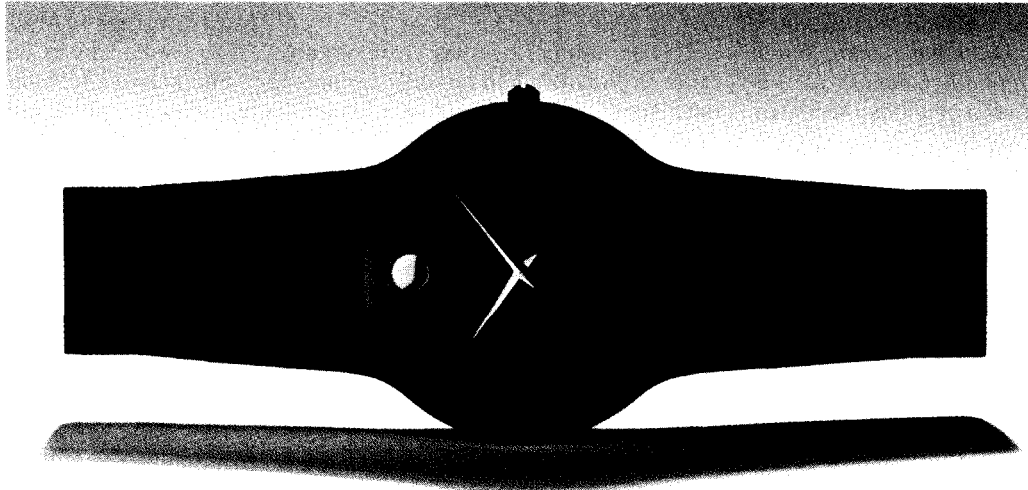
curing victory: in the Second World War, contrary to Beatty's assertion, the American and British maritime strategy was offensive, as exemplified by the D-Day landings.

Historically, the most developed defensive maritime strategy, tactics, and forces were those of the French Navy in the protracted Anglo-French conflict (1689-1815). But the French were defeated by the Royal Navy's offensive strategy, at sea and on land, with the help of the UK's European land allies.

This historical experience with the successes of offensive maritime strategies, including by the United Kingdom and the United States, has been ignored by the critics Beatty quotes. It should not be ignored by readers wishing to answer the important questions he raises.

ROBIN RANGER
Chevy Chase, Md.

An even more basic explanation of the Navy's new maritime strategy is the Navy's fixation on the airplane and the "bird-farm," alias the aircraft carrier. The reason for this fixation is that the Navy is overpopulated by "airdales," of-



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ficers who came up through the pilot ranks. It is a tight clique whose primary purpose is to protect, justify, and preserve the air arm of the Navy and, thus, the dinosaur aircraft carrier, which, in the final analysis, should become extinct like its predecessor.

These guardians of the Navy's air strategy have continuously invented reasons and scenarios for this high-cost, low-return weapons system. Their fixation, which has continued to be believed, funded, and operated by our leaders, is fallacious and hurting the real Navy—the "other" ships and submarines that are shortchanged by the slanted view of the airdales.

The solution—easy in terms of reason but difficult owing to entrenched bureaucracy and mind warp—is to cut back the "air Navy" in size and influence. A more balanced view of all options available to the Navy's brass should result.

ANDREW KARTALIS
Commander, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Beachwood, Ohio

SCRABBLE MASTERS

Barry Chamish's "Masters of the Tiles" (June *Atlantic*) was the best article on Scrabble I have seen, but I question the emphasis Chamish placed on the memorization of words. Although all eighty-nine words of only two letters in *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary* must be known in order to play the game successfully at a competitive level, and knowledge of the three-letter words that may be made by adding one letter to any of the eighty-nine is extremely helpful, a knowledge of strategy and, above all, a competitive spirit are far more helpful.

STUART GOLDMAN
San Francisco, Calif.

I have just read "Masters of the Tiles," and am stunned and saddened by the omission of my name from the ranks of the top Scrabble players. I am currently ranked seventh and have been in the forefront of the game for the past twelve years, winning more tournaments than perhaps anyone save Chuck Armstrong. Was this omission intentional?

CHARLES E. GOLDSTEIN
Berkeley, Calif.

After all the Scrabble players who have decided that there is only one right way to play Scrabble have died and

gone to their just reward, the rest of us will still be playing Scrabble very cheerily and placidly by whatever set of rules we, the players of any moment, choose. We will spell whatever words we agree are acceptable to us, assembled by whatever rules we agree upon, looking up words as we go, asking each other for help, volunteering help to one another, and taking as long as we like.

All the rule-makers and timekeepers and compilers of only acceptable words and all that other stuff can take it and stuff it.

A. B. SMITH
Winsted, Conn.

"Masters of the Tiles" was simply superb. I laughed aloud while reading it, and find it hard to envision myself memorizing endless lists of two-, three-, four-, and five-letter words in pursuit of the ultimate Scrabble score.

The author's allusion to the cabala as "in its way . . . an ancient Judaic form of Scrabble" leads me to the following observations:

1. I prefer to spell this label for Jewish mysticism Kabala—that is, with a *k* rather than a *c*, as the Hebrew letter for which it is a transliteration is a *koof*, not a *chaf*.

2. The number 613 has great significance in Judaism, and not only for mystics. According to all rabbinic authorities, the Torah contains a total of 613 *mitzvot* (commandments). *Gematria* (numerically based exegeses) have been woven around this number since Talmudic days, showing relationships between the number 613 and key verses in the Bible, parts of the human body, and even the number of threads and windings in the ritual *tzitzit* (ritual fringes, also a superb Scrabble word). To find out that the hypothetical perfect turn would yield a score of 613 should invigorate all who are attracted to both of these seemingly self-contained worlds.

RABBI DOUGLAS D. WEBER
Elyria, Ohio

I enjoyed Barry Chamish's article "Masters of the Tiles." As an amateur Scrabble player, I was comforted to know that great minds out there are solving the complexities of the game. One burning question, however, remains unanswered: Is it legal—or, more important, morally correct—to use a word for which one does not know the definition?

COLLEEN FARRELL
San Francisco, Calif.

Barry Chamish replies:

I thank Stuart Goldman for his overall endorsement of my article. Coming from this Scrabble master, it means a lot.

My original article did mention Charles Goldstein and a few other top players, but their names were excluded during the course of editing. My apologies to Mr. Goldstein and to Sam Orbaum, a player with a 1,807 rating and the founder of the Israeli Scrabble Federation.

I suggest that A. B. Smith try to be tolerant of other people's ways. Some people enjoy playing competitively in tournaments, and they will not interfere with Smith's enjoyment of casual play at home.

I thank Rabbi Weber for his kind words. I spelled *cabala* with a *k*, but my editors chose the *c* spelling preferred by many dictionaries.

ADVICE & CONSENT

I was astonished to read Tracy Danison's letter in the July issue (Letters to the Editor), in which she asserts that there is no evidence of anti-Semitic inclinations in Jesse Jackson's public record (referring to William Schneider's "The Democrats in '88," April *Atlantic*).

She excuses Jackson's "Hymie-town" remark with the amazing statement that he senses "basic differences between the aspirations of the poor and a 'made' ethnic group with a great stake in the status quo." Ms. Danison goes on to say that "blacks have benefited least (in absolute terms, anyway) from the civil-rights movement, while . . . Jews, Italian Catholics, Armenians, and other white 'minorities,' have benefited greatly."

Her most incredible implication is that derogatory racist language is acceptable if you believe that the group in question has "different aspirations" from yours. Since the topic was not respiratory illness, another offensive implication is that Jews as a group have resisted progress in civil rights—and this is followed by the incredible claim that Jews, while not a "real" minority, have somehow usurped the benefits that were meant for blacks.

If a public official used racist terms to describe blacks or Hispanics, Ms. Danison would ridicule any talk of sensing different aspirations, as well she should. Racist language demonstrates contempt, and this is as true for Jesse Jack-

son as it was for George Wallace. Civil rights legislation in the United States gave blacks the vote, provided them with legal recourse for job, housing, and credit discrimination, allowed them access to public schools and universities, and mandated various affirmative-action programs. Although many problems still exist, it is ludicrous to say that Jews and Armenians were the prime beneficiaries of the legislation, and that blacks received little benefit.

DAN SCHWARCZ
Jersey City, N.J.

With regard to Stanley Plumly's poem "Hedgerows" (June *Atlantic*): As an expatriate Englander with an avid interest in wildlife (and poetry), I must point out that Mr. Plumly is in error in equating the weaver thrush with England's mistle thrush. The North American thrushes are about six or seven inches long, whereas a mistle thrush is at least 50 percent larger. It is a very robust bird, which nests in March or April; its call is best approximated by the rattling call of the blue jay. Another fact that sets it apart is its inordinate aggressiveness. I

have been personally attacked by mistle thrushes when near their nests.

Mr. Plumly's poem was beautiful and evocative, a "keeper" if I ever read one.

DAVID EMMONDS
New York, N.Y.

The July, 1987, Almanac states that there are four West Coast species of salmon. This is incorrect; there are five species. The West Coast species belong to the genus *Oncorhynchus*. Their common names are chinook, also called the spring or king salmon; the chum or dog salmon; the coho or silver salmon; the pink salmon; and last but not least, the sockeye or red salmon.

DAVID ZITTIN
Cupertino, Calif.

CORRECTION

An error by the typesetter resulted in a garbled version of the first paragraph of "The Widow," by Beth Lordan, in the August issue. Here is the correct version of that paragraph:

"The morning Warren Boyd dropped

dead in his kitchen, he was the only living person on the farm. Just back of the barn two milk cows stood near each other in the light sun, staring across a small pasture toward three old apple trees. Farther off twelve heifers were working their way from a mud patch by a salt block down to a rock pile where blackberries were in bloom; they'd get to the shade of the willows about noon. The one that was mostly white, with an Africa-shaped black spot covering her left shoulder, took off running and bucking, but none of the others joined in, and so she calmed down and went back to grazing. The barn was empty. Up behind the vegetable garden a solitary lamb dozed under broad burdocks; near the back porch three laying hens murmured over small insects they found deep in the grass. The lilacs were gone by, and bees worked flowering weeds that had strayed from the first meadow into the yard. Unless one of the heifers took it into her mind to find her way out of the big pasture and into the road, or into some neighbor's garden, nobody would call Warren Boyd on the telephone and then come by to find out he was dead."



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THE SKIES

September 7, Full Moon, also known this month as the Fruit Moon; 23, Autumnal Equinox; the Sun, moving south, crosses the Equator, and winter heads north. Also on this day a New Moon and an annular eclipse of the Sun—the latter visible over nearly half the globe, from the Russian steppes to the South Pacific.

GOVERNMENT

September 9, Congress returns to work after its month-long summer recess. 16, Celebration of Citizenship day, during which the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution will be broadcast on national TV and radio, for perhaps the 12 zillionth time this year. 17, the bicentennial of the signing of the Constitution. 30, the end of the federal government's fiscal year 1987.



HEALTH & SAFETY

September 20-26, National School Bus Safety Week, and the occasion for renewed debate about whether seat belts should be installed in school buses. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Safety Council say that seat belts in school buses are more likely to harm than help young children—rupturing organs in an accident. Also, children are already 350 times safer in school buses than in cars. The National Coalition for Seatbelts on School Buses, a vocal parents' group, wants children to buckle up anyway—partly for reasons of "habit formation." The people more sorely in need of habit formation, however, may be drivers who do not stop when school buses do: four times as many children are killed while getting on or off school buses as are killed while actually riding on them.

FOOD

"It is unseasonable and unwholesome in all months that have not an *r* in their name to eat an oyster"—Dr. William Butler, *Dye's Dry Dinner* (1599). Actually, part of Butler's claim went out of date a century ago, with the advent of refrigeration, but the part about unseasonability remains valid. Authorities close some oyster beds in summertime, when breeding and seeding occur; oysters are therefore scarce and costly. Also, summer oysters tend to be thin, watery, and relatively unappetizing. September—the first month since April with the requisite *r*—marks the return of a plentiful, plump, succulent, seasonable bivalve.

ENVIRONMENT

The waters of Lake Superior reach their annual high in September. The water level in the Great Lakes has been rising during the past few years, and some lakeside communities have lost up to 90 percent of their beaches to high water and erosion. This year, though, shore dwellers will get a respite, thanks to abnormally low amounts of snow and rain since last fall. There are no grounds for complacency: the Great Lakes are notoriously erratic in the short and the long term. A 1985 government study determined that as recently as the 17th century Lake Michigan's water level was some 5 feet higher than what is considered normal today, and more than 3 feet higher than existing shore-protection structures have been designed to accommodate.



DEMOGRAPHICS

By the time school doors open this September, some 100,000 people who were teachers last June will have voluntarily left the teaching profession for reasons other than retirement. According to a recent survey of former teachers conducted by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, complaints about low pay and working conditions are the chief reasons why teachers leave teaching; complaints about students are not far behind. In the Los Angeles County school district last year school personnel were the victims of 805 assaults. Students committed 587 sex offenses and 426 armed robberies. The number of students arrested for possession of bombs and explosives was 253. When asked by Metropolitan Life researchers, "What would it take to get you to *return* to teaching?" 21 percent of the former teachers surveyed answered that "nothing" could get them to return.



ARTS & LETTERS

September 19-26, Banned Books Week. 20, the 39th annual Emmy Awards presentation; the new TV season begins the next day. In an effort to regain its traditional No. 1 place in the ratings, CBS plans to introduce more shows (9) than either last-place ABC or first-place NBC. New CBS shows this fall will feature, among other characters: "a tough district attorney in a large Southern California city [and] Max, an aging, half-deaf bulldog"; a "slightly starched Massachusetts college professor who inherits a down-home New Orleans restaurant in a mostly black neighborhood"; and "a powerful man/beast, whose fearsome appearance belies his intelligence and nobility of spirit."

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NEW STAMPS

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125 YEARS AGO

M. A. Dodge, writing in the September, 1862, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "A great mistake is lying around loose hereabouts,—a mistake fatal to many friendships that did run well. The common fallacy is that intimacy dispenses with the necessity of politeness. The truth is just the opposite of this. The more points of contact there are, the more danger of friction there is, and the more carefully should people guard against it. If you see a man only once a month, it is not of so vital importance that you do not trench on his rights, tastes, or whims. He can be tolerated, or crossed or annoyed occasionally. . . . But you and the man with whom you dine every day have it in your power to make each other exceedingly uncomfortable. A very little dropping will wear away rock, if it only keep at it."





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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

HELP FOR THE TV-SHY

ALMOST EVERY SHOW on television, including the news, has parts that are too embarrassing for normal people to watch. On *L.A. Law*, for example, Mr. Sifuentes once had a romantic dinner with a pretty dentist who had retained him, just before injecting him with Novocain, to represent her in a malpractice suit that had been filed by a patient who believed that she (the dentist) had installed a tiny radio in her (the patient's) mouth.

That wasn't the embarrassing part. The embarrassing part came after the romantic dinner, when the dentist said in a sexy voice that she was going to do something very special for Mr. Sifuentes. Then, suddenly, she was straddling Mr. Sifuentes and using some sort of dental equipment to clean Mr. Sifuentes's teeth. While she was doing this, she was saying—

Naturally, I have no idea what she was

saying. The whole time she was saying it, I was saying “*buh buh buh*” and poking my fingers in and out of my ears. I bet there aren't ten people in America who know what that dentist said to Mr. Sifuentes.

If you're watching a movie on a VCR, you can fast-forward through the embarrassing parts. But you can't do that with ordinary television, unless you videotape everything and then watch the tape. When the embarrassing parts come on, you have to run out of the room, sing in a high voice, eat a big mouthful of potato chips, or say “*buh buh buh*” and poke your fingers in and out of your ears. Or wear a protector hat.

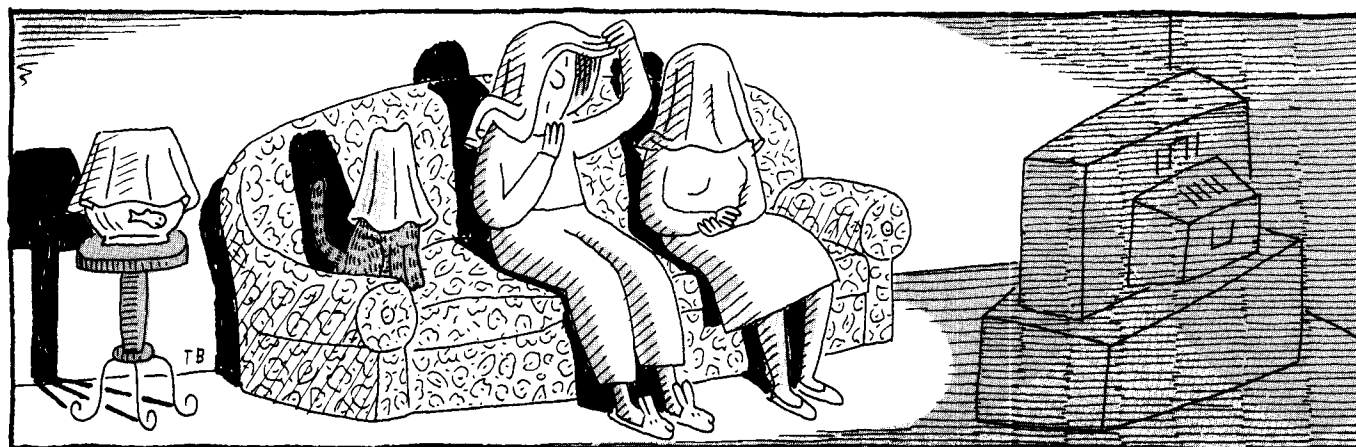
I invented the protector hat one night while my wife and I were watching *Moonlighting* and folding the laundry. It was that terrible episode in which Maddie and David speak in fake Shakespearean English and act out a sort of parody of *The Taming of the Shrew*, complete with period props and costumes. There were so many embarrassing parts that blocking out all of them would have made it impossible to fold the laundry. I tried shaking my head back and forth rapidly, to distort my hearing, but this gave me a headache.

Then I had an idea. I folded a dish towel in half and put it on my head. I could still see and hear the show, but the embarrassing parts seemed less embarrassing. Objectively, a dish towel draped on the head offers no protection against anything. And yet it helped. “Put on a protector hat,” I said to my wife. “It helps.”

With towels on our heads, we were able to watch the rest of the show. A very embarrassing parts I would pull firmly on all four corners of my towel applying a protective pressure to the top of my head. At extremely embarrassing parts I would stuff the end of the towel between my glasses and my eyes. At times the show became so embarrassing that I wondered whether we would have to wear protector hats for the rest of our lives. But we made it through.

How do protector hats work? I don't know. Why does pulling a blanket over your head make it impossible for Martians to shoot you in your sleep? I don't know that, either. Perhaps it has something to do with the chemistry of the brain or certain properties of cloth. All I know is that it helps.

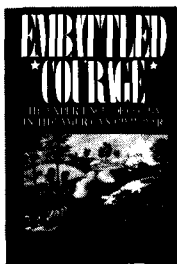
—David Owen



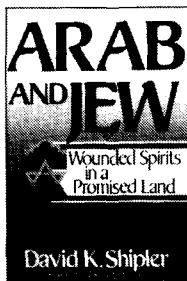
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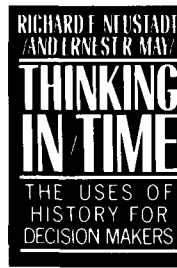
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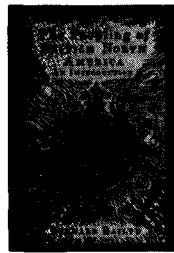
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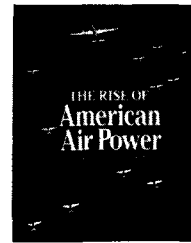
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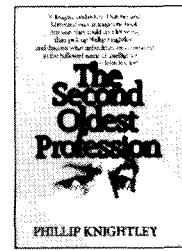
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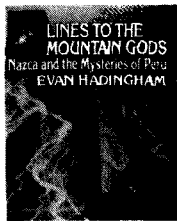
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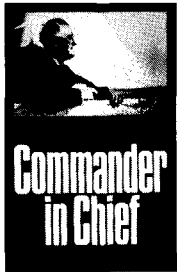
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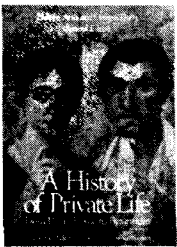
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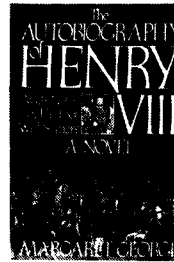
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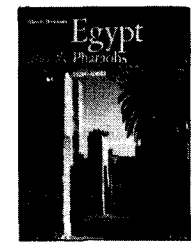
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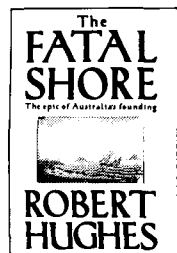
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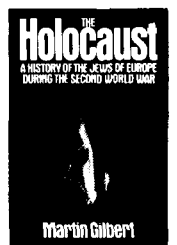
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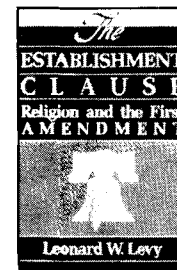
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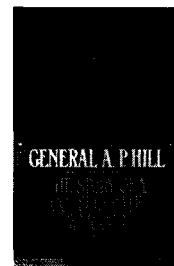
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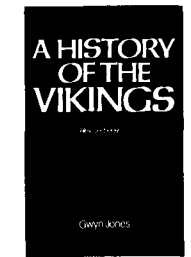
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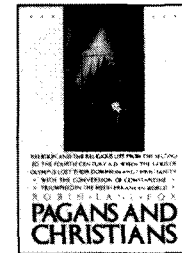
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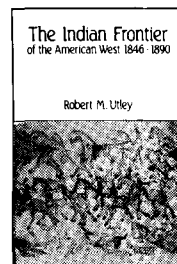
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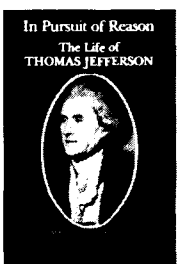
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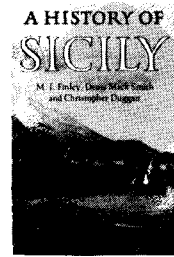
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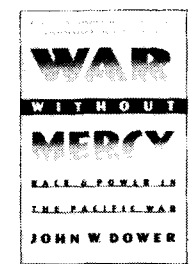
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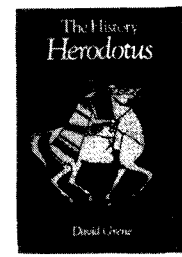
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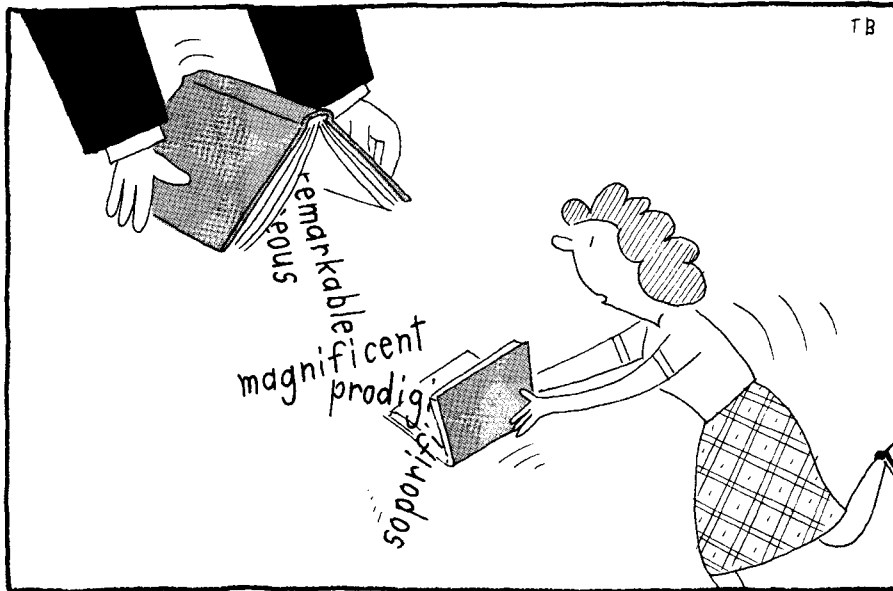
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RUFFLES AND FLOURISHES

“CHILDREN LIKE A fine word occasionally,” Beatrix Potter once told her publisher, when he complained about the use of the word *soporific* in her book *The Tale of Flossy Bunnies*. I taught grammar-school students for the better part of two decades, and I count myself firmly in Ms. Potter’s camp. It follows, of course, that I can muster little enthusiasm for basal readers, those homogenized and bowdlerized grade-school texts, edited according to elaborate readability formulas and syllable schemes, that constitute the bulk of the average child’s officially sanctioned reading material in American schools. Basal readers can be criticized on a lot of grounds. Their worst fault, I think, is that for no good reason they squeeze the juice out of some very fine tales. Here is a passage from the Paul Leyssac translation of Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Emperor’s New Clothes”:

“Magnificent!” “Excellent!” “Prodigious!” went from mouth to mouth, and everyone was exceedingly pleased.

Here is the same passage as rendered in a modern reader:

“How marvelous,” they echoed the emperor. “How beautiful!”

Sure, *prodigious* is a tough word, but it’s a word that young readers would be pleased, perhaps exceedingly pleased, to try out, to repeat, to save.

Admittedly, the publishers of basal readers encounter prodigious difficulties in the preparation of their texts. They are under acute and conflicting pressures from educators, from parents, and from organized interest groups of every kind. Too, the sensibility of many old stories may often be at odds with the tenor of our times. In many instances, however, the sense behind the censorship seems impossible to fathom. The difference between many familiar children’s stories in their original form and the way they appear in basal readers is, indeed, so striking and the changes, it seems to me, so unnecessary that several years ago I began comparing old and new versions line by line.

A good many of the editorial changes are of a kind that one would never write an angry letter about but that nevertheless give one pause. I have in mind changes like the following:

Original

Do a tapdance!

Cook spaghetti!
“Trust me,”
I said.
Come to my
house at eleven.

The sea is
our enemy.
wily swindlers,
crafty rogues
cornflakes
Rubbish!

Basal

Chirp like
a bird!

Cook pancakes!
“You’ll see,”
I said.
Come to my
house around
twelve.

The sea is
not our friend.
weavers

potatoes
Why?

This sort of thing does not, I suppose, amount to extreme literary deprivation, but the average classic children’s tale—a work by, say, Andersen, Kipling, or Pearl Buck—in basal form contains hundreds of such alterations. Taken together they suggest a preternatural disposition to tinker, which in turn perhaps reinforces a parallel disposition to cut and trim and simplify, to tame and domesticate what is powerful, florid, and wild in the way that good writers use our language.

The latter disposition is pronounced. Consider how, in Kipling’s “How the Camel Got His Hump,” “sticks and thorns and tamarisks and milkweed and prickles” becomes, in basal form, “sticks and shrubs”; or how a “great big lolloping humph” turns into a “great big humph.” You lose a great big lolloping lot when you lose the humph’s gerundive. Consider how, in Walter Blair’s “Pecos Bill,” “giving a coyote yell of a size to make any state that was less tough than Oklahoma split right down the middle” becomes, in basal versions, “howling like a coyote.” One of the stories my students have most enjoyed over the years is *Flat Stanley*, by Jeff Brown. As the title implies, Stanley has gotten himself flattened, and the story goes on to describe the very special things that a flat boy can do, including travel across the country by mail. Here is a passage from Brown:

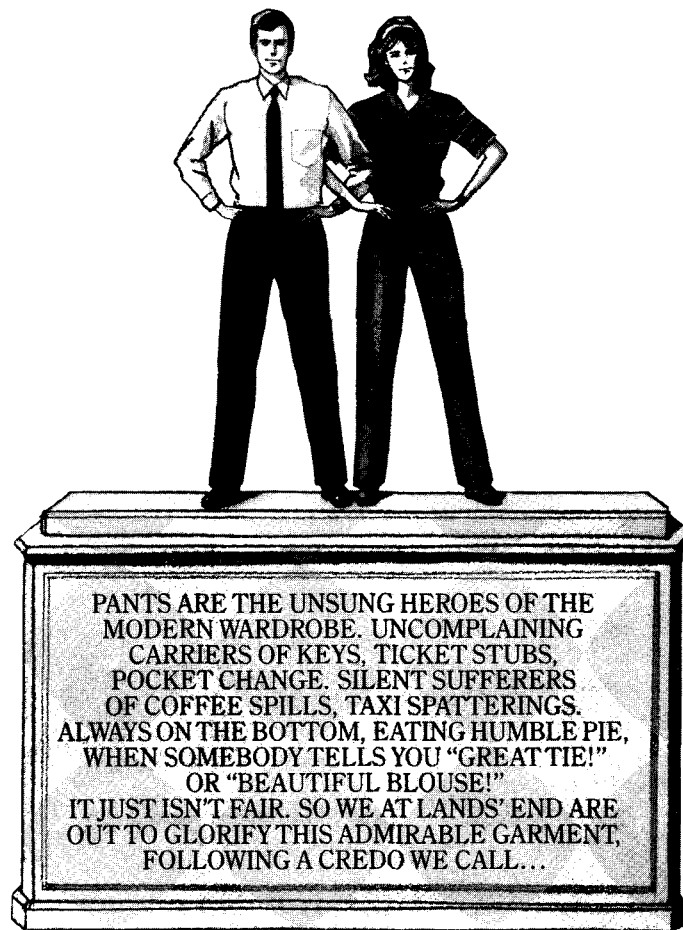
The envelope fit Stanley very well. There was even room left over, Mrs. Lambchop discovered, for an egg-salad sandwich made with thin bread, and a flat cigarette case filled with milk.

They had to put a great many stamps on the envelope to pay for both airmail and insurance, but it was still much less expensive than a train or airplane ticket to California would have been.

Here is how the passage appears in a basal reader:

The envelope fit Stanley very well. There was even room left over for a sandwich.

My students always loved the author’s mention of thin bread—they knew he was being very deliberate in his choice of words, and they appreciated his nod to their intelligence, his acknowledgment that they would know he was sustaining a joke. They appreciated, too, the humor of egg salad—a much yuckier substance than, for instance, bologna,



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and one with which you would certainly not choose to be sealed in an envelope. I appreciate the taboo governing allusions to cigarettes, and yet what my students tended to note is not the reference to tobacco but rather Mrs. Lambchop's ingenuity in finding a way to make sure that her son, while in the mail, is able to drink his milk. Eventually, Stanley's friends mail him back from California in

a beautiful white envelope they had made themselves. It had red-and-blue markings to show that it was airmail, and Thomas Jeffrey had lettered it "Valuable" and "Fragile" and "This End Up" on both sides.

Basal readers simply stuff the kid in "a beautiful, large white envelope," and get on with the story.

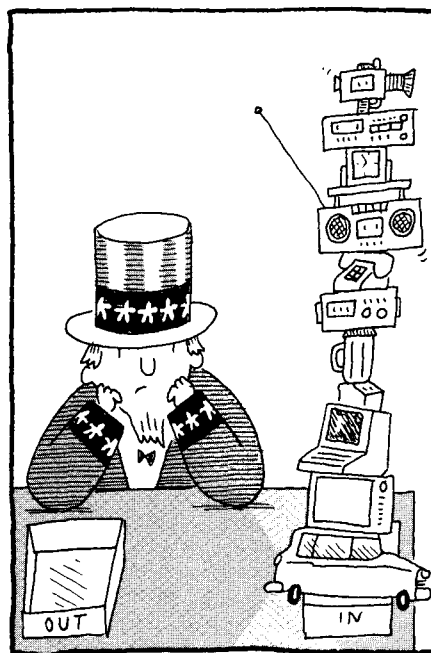
I have compiled notebook after notebook of alterations of just this kind, which probably makes me some kind of a nut. I find it hard to believe, though, that the unscrupulous editing of basal readers doesn't matter. Like *Bartleby the Scrivener*, modern reading textbooks are "pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn." There is room in our children's literature for silliness, for unpleasantness, and for difficult words that children do not know. Above all, there is a place for detail and nuance and subtlety, which children perhaps admire more than adults do. Young readers are not like the Emperor of Austria, who told Mozart that his music was great but complained that there were too many notes. Perhaps a few of them could be cut?

Mozart was lucky. He succeeded in silencing his critic with the question, "Which few did you have in mind?" The editors of modern basal readers, unfortunately, would have had a reply. There is a book kids love called *Nate the Great*, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat, and here is a passage that does not appear in any of the basal versions:

"Fang has sharp teeth and I, Nate the Great, say that we should keep anybody happy with sharp teeth. Very happy."

I never used the basal texts, and so my students could sigh and grin over that phrase "Very happy." They copied the device, as they did other devices, in their own writing. Children notice and savor the ruffles and flourishes in special writing. It is these, in the end, that keep us reading books.

—Susan Ohanian



JAPAN

PLAYING BY DIFFERENT RULES

In the U.S. economy the consumer is sovereign; in the Japanese the producer is. It's a fundamental difference

SOMETHING IS peculiar about the way we discuss "trade wars." When America and Japan really were at war, each country was trying to blow the other up. Now the threat from Japan is—what? That its companies will devise more appealing products than our companies can, and will then offer them to us at a lower price. Where's the aggression or hostile intent? What makes this anything like Pearl Harbor?

Economists, of course, have comebacks to such questions. Maybe the Japanese are offering cut-rate goods today purely in hopes of squeezing out the competition and collecting big monopoly profits later on. Maybe we'll be forced into a kind of peonage if Japan comes to control all the high-grade, sophisticated manufacturing and we're left to sell soybeans and rent out our big-league ballplayers for service with the Hiroshima Carp.

Still, according to all the basic logic of our economic system, we shouldn't worry about trade wars, any more than we worry about being offered a gift.

If another country will sell us goods for less than it costs us to make them, why should we complain? It doesn't really matter whether the supplying country is more efficient or is merely willing to "dump," selling the goods at a loss. In either case, foreign trade leaves us with the steel girders or the color TVs we might have made ourselves, *plus* the cash we've saved by buying for less. If the Japanese want to exploit themselves and sell below their true cost, that's their problem—all they're doing is raising our standard of living at the expense of theirs. If the Koreans are willing to work for low wages we should be happy to buy their shoes for \$8 instead of \$48 and use the \$40 for something else. The extra wealth for America—the \$40 we get besides the pair of shoes—will presumably give us leeway to invest in newer, more productive industries, or simply to make up the lost incomes of people who used to produce shoes.

So goes the theory of free trade, as I learned it in my economics course; and as it's explained in America whenever someone wants to prove that protectionism is bad. I was steeped in the theory when I arrived in Japan, early last year. I still think it's the right answer to most of what's wrong with the world's economy. But I no longer think that it tells us much about dealing with Japan.

It's hard to make the objections to free trade with Japan sound as neat and elegant as the original theory itself. The objections center on this point: free trade assumes certain things about human behavior that may not be correct when applied to the Japanese. This is not because the Japanese are a separate species, as they sometimes contend, but because their society's definition of the good life is different from Adam Smith's.

The Adam Smith, free-trade view of life rests on three pillars:

1. Economic problems are always solved by *more* trade, not less. When goods flow from low-cost production sites to markets in higher-cost areas, everyone is better off. The more smoothly they flow, the greater the all-around benefit, since each part of the world is doing what it can do best.

2. The desirability of more trade rests, in turn, on the assumption that the world is full of "economic men," who go through life making rational cost-benefit decisions. Their appetites and prefer-

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ences may differ—if wages go up, some people will work more, because the payoff is greater, and others will work less, because they can earn what they need in a shorter time. But everyone will respond to market signals to get the best deal for himself. As a result, everyone will *naturally* act in a way that promotes international trade. Everyone wants a bargain; the best bargains are by definition available from the world's lowest-cost producers; freer trade will select the most efficient producers and make more goods available at a lower overall cost.

3. This picture of economic man, in its turn, rests on an even deeper assumption about what life, or at least the commercial part of it, is for. Efficient production is good because it leads to lower prices, and lower prices are good because they let people have “more”: more food, more clothes, more leisure, more variety, more of everything money can buy. And in providing more, the capitalist free-trade system offers its only justification for itself. Competitive capitalism is crueler than other economic systems—the bankruptcies, the unemployment. But in return it offers people more material wealth and a higher standard of living than any other system has done. For at least the past century America and most other developed nations have willingly accepted this bargain. No pain, no gain. By the logic of the market, competition is always good, because it offers people more, and a free world trading system is best, because it offers people most.

As long as all the participants are after the same thing—“more”—then the world trading system should work fine. Markets will clear. Like magnetism, sexual attraction, and other powerful interactions, free trade starts with two parties that have symmetrical goals and motivations, and it takes them toward a predictable result.

But suppose one participant doesn't have the same goals as the others. Then the results won't be what was expected—in an electromagnet, at a freshman mixer, or in the world trading system. Suppose, to stick to economics, that one country isn't really interested in buying products from anywhere else, because it is not powerfully motivated by lower prices, *because having more is not its principal goal*. Then free trade's solution to all problems—everyone should buy more from everyone else—won't necessarily make sense.

THIS, I'VE COME to think, is the basic story of Japan and the United States—really, of Japan and the rest of the world. Japan is not mainly interested in a higher standard of living for its people; America is. Given those different starting points, free trade will almost inevitably lead to chronic trade surpluses for Japan, chronic deficits for the United States. That outcome is not necessarily bad in itself, but it forces us to make a choice that few politicians have yet offered to us. Which really bothers us more: the chronic “failures” in trade with Japan, or the violence we'd have to do to free trade to correct them?

Let me clarify what I'm *not* trying to say. To argue that Japan tends toward surplus does not mean that its industries, managers, and workers are the “best” in the world. Some of them may be; even so, free-trade theory assumes that trade accounts would still balance out. If Japan really were better at manufacturing than any other country, its exports would keep rising and so (because of supply-demand forces on the currency exchange) would the value of the yen. Goods from the rest of the world would become cheaper; its people, wanting “more,” would recognize and seize these bargains. Equilibrium would be restored. This is essentially what happened to America in the generation after the Second World War. Our industries were world-beaters; our dollars grew strong, and we spent those dollars—and spent and spent. But the chronic trade imbalance reflects something more than Japanese manufacturing skill.

I also don't mean to say that the United States bears no responsibility for its trade and budget deficits. We're more responsible for the size of the deficits than anyone else is. The U.S. trade deficit was about \$150 billion last year, or more than five times larger than the normal rate in the late 1970s. It could never have gotten so large so fast if the federal budget deficit had not been booming at the same time. (To summarize a long but now standard explanation: Japan and Germany *had* to run big trade surpluses with the United States in the 1980s, to earn the dollars they then lent us to cover our budget deficit.) Moreover, eliminating all identifiable trade barriers in Japan would, in the short run, eliminate only part of the U.S.-Japan trade deficit, since so many “imports” are really Japanese-made components for American products and subcontracts for American firms.

Finally, I would never deny the American business, American culture, American habits—let's face it, Americans—are to blame for many of our export failings. Our children don't learn enough about math or science, or the smartest people end up planning hostile corporate takeovers or designing attack submarines, we don't naturally think of export markets, but our managers and unions do naturally think of getting a man out of a company in the shortest possible time. Lee Iacocca tried to make himself the symbol of America's industrial rebirth, but by paying himself \$20 million in a year when Chrysler's earnings declined, he has become as grim a symbol as Ivan Boesky of what the Japanese think is killing us.

This cultural-doom analysis is very familiar, and it can be overdone. Do U.S. companies think of the U.S. market first? That may say less about our parochialism than about the size of our market—a lot of Taiwanese companies think of America first too. Still, the charge that we've become culturally unfit is true enough to make us re-examine our schools, our management ethic and ultimately our values. Unless we start correcting our own failings, we're in no position to hector the Japanese.

But even if America solved its cultural problems, even if our students joyfully tackled extra homework and employees strove always to enhance the honor of the firm, I suspect that Japan would still be involved in trade wars against us and others. The deficits would be smaller but the tensions would still be there. The reason is that the free-trade solution—everyone buying more from everyone else—runs counter to a deep value in Japanese life: the non-capitalist desire to preserve every Japanese person's place in the Japanese productive system. In the United States and in most of the world that Adam Smith describes, people suffer indignities as *producers*—through layoffs, job changes, shifts into new businesses—in order to improve the welfare of the society's *consumers*. In Japan it's the other way around. The Japanese consumer's interest comes last—and therefore so does the motivation for buying from overseas.

Of course, the Japanese market is not as self-contained as Albania's, or as obviously tariff-bound as Taiwan's or South Korea's. One of the first things American visitors to Japan see, as they stumble bleary-eyed through Narita Airport, the sign on every luggage cart reading

The way beyond Babel.

Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the de facto standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

The solution, as we see it, is common standards which would allow electronic systems in one or many locations to work together. People will be informed and in control, while the systems exchange,

process, and act on information automatically.

AT&T is working with national, international, and industry-wide organizations to set up comprehensive, international standards to be shared by everyone who uses and provides information technology. We think it's time for everyone in our industry to commit to developing firm, far-reaching standards. The goal: to provide our customers with maximum flexibility and utility. Then, they can decide how and with whom to work.

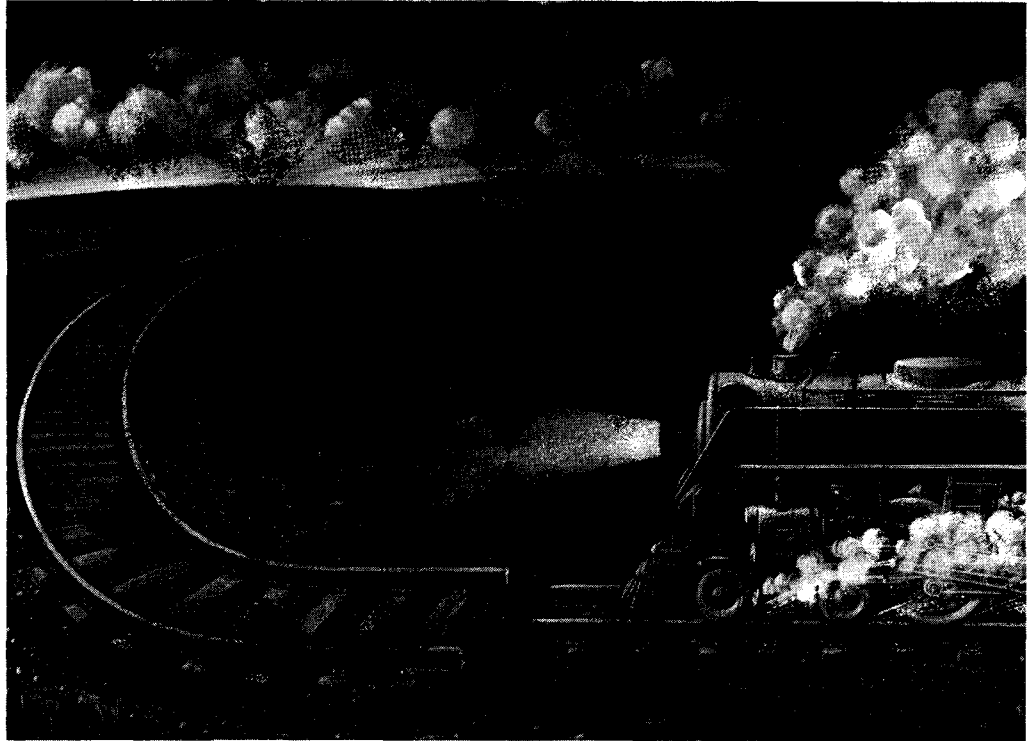
We foresee a time when the promise of the Information Age will be realized. People will participate in a world-wide Telecommunity through a vast, global network of networks, the merging of communications and computers. They'll be able to handle

information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they make a phone call today.

The science is here now. The technology is coming along rapidly. But only with compatibility will the barriers to Telecommunity recede.

Telecommunity is our goal. Technology is our means.

We're committed to leading the way.



IMPORT NOW!, conveniently in English. American brand names—McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, (Tokyo) Disneyland—are ubiquitous in Japan. Ken-ichi Ohmae, the author of *Beyond National Borders*, and the managing director of McKinsey & Company in Japan, has pointed out time and again that American-owned companies sell about as much to Japan as Japanese-owned companies do to the United States. (The difference, of course, is that most of the "American" products are made in Japan, in Japanese-American joint ventures, thereby protecting the Japanese producer's interests.) Japanese trade officials have a standard anyone-can-succeed-in-Japan presentation for foreign visitors, usually starring Mister Donut, Schick razors, and BMW cars. Its moral is, you can sell as long as you make a truly high-quality product (strike one against America) and strive earnestly to meet local tastes (strikes two and three, we're out).

Technically, the trade officials are right. With enough work, almost anything could be sold in Japan, even American rice or Korean cars. The difference is the natural tendency of the system. The United States, putting the consumer's interest first, naturally buys up whatever offers the best value, unless some lobby or cartel stands in the way. Japan, putting the (Japanese) producer's interest first, naturally resists importing anything but raw materials. Selling to America is like rolling a ball downhill. Selling to Japan is like fighting against guerrillas, or bailing against a siphon, or betting against the house. You can win, but the odds are not on your side.

None of the illustrations of this point is conclusive in itself, but together they suggest a deviation from the logic of capitalism and free trade. Capitalist societies are supposed to respond to price, so as to get "more." Japan does not.

Food is the classic illustration. Japan imports about half its calories, but if it cared mainly about price, it would import much more food. By refusing to import rice and blocking many other imports, Japan protects its farmers (and avoids antagonizing the gangsters in the beef industry) but penalizes every consumer in the country, through grotesquely inflated prices for food and land. Food may seem an exceptional case: it's an emotional issue; every major country protects its farmers to some degree; most Japanese still have a sentimental tie to the soil. What makes it so

intriguing is that there's almost no complaint from the victims of the policy. Last spring a coalition of Japanese consumer groups protested food policy—but what concerned them was the suggestion that Japan should import more cheap food. They recommended that Japan's superexpensive rice should "never" be exposed to foreign competition.

The retail network is another famous example. A hundred years ago the United States had a retail system much like Japan's today: fragmented, diverse, family-owned, and inefficient. America doesn't have many Mom-and-Pop stores anymore (except for immigrant-run groceries), because they've been bulldozed under by Sears, Safeway, K-mart, and other large-scale, low-cost operations. The Mom-and-Pops put up a political fight in the 1920s and 1930s and tried to outlaw the chain stores. But, as Thomas McCraw and Patricia O'Brien wrote recently in *America versus Japan*, they were snubbed by courts, legislatures, and even voters in referenda. Chain stores offered lower prices; therefore they were good. Japan has followed just the opposite course. In the past fifteen years government directives have made it harder to open discount stores, supermarkets, or other low-cost outlets that would improve the consumer's standard of living but would threaten the tiny greengrocer down the block.

Right-thinking Americans know that monopolies and cartels are bad, because they hurt the consumer. Japan *likes* cartels and some monopolies, because they strengthen Japanese producers against foreign competition. Japanese steel-makers, in the 1960s and 1970s, and semiconductor makers, in the 1970s and 1980s, have invested more heavily in advanced production equipment than any of them would have dared to on its own. It would be cheaper, in the short term, to keep using the old machines, which is what many American companies have done. The Japanese companies could take this "risk" because of their cartel-based faith that the famous Ministry of International Trade and Industry, MITI, would divide up the work fairly whenever the market went slack.

Japanese taxpayers would save money if they bought military aircraft direct from American producers. Although our own military budget may make this hard to believe, it is cheaper to buy the next F-15 off the production line than to set up a production line of your own. Nonetheless, the F-15s that the Air Self-

Defense Force flies are made in Japan, under American license. Japan is scheduled to introduce a new fighter plane late in this decade. Buying an existing American model would be cheaper—that is, would hold down Japanese taxes, would give Japanese consumers "more." But unless the trade-war pressure from America becomes too intense, Japan seems almost sure to build its own fighter, at up to twice the cost of an imported plane.

One last, humble illustration is soda ash. This is an important chemical used for making glass, other chemicals, and detergents. Japanese soda-ash producers use petroleum-fired boilers that even in the cheap-oil days seemed to be burning money. American-made soda ash is cheaper. The American trade association that has been trying to sell it in Japan claims that it could be offered for significantly less than the made-in-Japan price. For years the association made no headway whatsoever. Then, in 1983, Japan's Fair Trade Commission found that Japanese companies were colluding to keep the Americans out. American suppliers quickly expanded their share of the market from three to 15 percent, but then got very little more. The yen has gone up, dollar prices have plummeted, but the market share has barely budged. An executive of Asahi Glass, a major purchaser, recently announced that he'd never leave his high-cost Japanese supplier—they'd been friends in school. "This isn't exactly collusion," an American diplomat told me. "It's simply a refusal to act on price."

Early this year the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris, offered an intriguing analysis of what the cumulative refusals to act on price meant for Japan. For 1986 as a whole, the average yen-dollar exchange rate was 169 to 1. At that rate Japan's per capita income was just below America's, and at the rates prevailing early this year, when the dollar plunged into the 140s, Japan was clearly the "richest" major country in the world. But the OECD went on to adjust incomes in each country for purchasing power and then recalculate the rate. In terms that matter to consumers, the "real" exchange rate was 223 to 1.

This is the single most illuminating statistic to come out of Japan. (Or maybe one of the two most illuminating. The other, which needs to be repeated as often as possible, is that at current market rates Japan's land all together is "worth"

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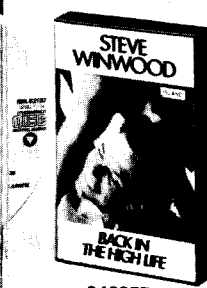
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more than America's, even though the United States is twenty-five times as large.) It is important because of what it says about the repression of consumer interests in Japan. The gap between the official and "real" exchange rates—between something in the 140s to the 160s and 223—is the wealth that Japan has denied its own consumers in order to preserve its market share. To put it another way, the gap means that products from the rest of the world are available to the Japanese at astonishing bargain rates. For 140 yen a Japanese consumer can buy a dollar and use it to buy clothes, food, or machinery that would cost him more than 200 yen to buy at home. If Japan wanted to, it could even buy its way out of its domestic-housing problem. It can't import land, but by importing more food it could free up precious flatland now used for farming and let the Japanese move out of their "rabbit hutches."

The world would seem to be Japan's bargain basement, but Japan is not interested. What makes Japan unusual is not that it sells so much to other countries—West Germany's exports make up 34 percent of its gross national product, while Japan's make up 13 percent—but that it buys so little. West Germany imports the equivalent of 30 percent of its GNP, Japan about 10 percent—mainly raw materials it can't produce for itself. If the yen rises high enough, Japan will finally be priced out of its export surplus. But if it were a society of economic men, it would have begun buying its way out of the surplus long before now.

UNDERSTANDING WHY Japan behaves this way would be a life's work. One theory, popular among the Japanese, holds that the trade surplus reflects the people's inborn frugality, moderation, and unsurpassed productive skill. Perhaps it reflects the bias of the political system toward paternalistic decisions, made by small elites sheltered from life as the ordinary consumer knows it. Japan is an impeccably free society but in practice not a very democratic one. The most important political decisions are always made by committees, oligarchies, bureaucracies, party-leadership councils. In an article called "The Japan Problem," published in *Foreign Affairs* late last year, the Dutch journalist Karel van Wolferen, who has lived in Japan for twenty-five years, argued that power in Japan was dispersed among a number of semi-autonomous baronies, each of



which promoted its own interests and laughed off any attempt to change course. Prime Minister Nakasone, viewing the nation's predicament as a whole, might understand that Japan needed to start spending more on itself. But, van Wolferen said, all the component parts of the system—the huge industrial companies, the labor unions, MITI, the farmers—were programmed to build market share, cut profit when necessary, resist foreign penetration, and export, export, export. Early last year the Japanese government rolled the drums for the Maekawa report, an ambitious proposal to increase imports, improve living standards, shorten the work week to five days, and generally make Japan a nation of economic men. By the end of the year, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor, the number of firms with a five-day week appeared to have gone *down*. (On the other hand, in the wake of the Maekawa report the average Japanese worker was skipping out of the office at day's end a minute and fifteen seconds earlier.) The rest of the world may think Japan is rich, but its people seem to regard the *endaka*—"strong-yen"—crisis as the occasion for yet another round of belt-tightening. From September of 1985 to December of 1986 the yen's value against the dollar rose by almost 52 percent. But Toyota, Nissan, and Honda were so determined to hold on to market share that they swallowed most of the currency change and raised their dollar prices by only 15 percent.

There are other theories. For exam-

ple, maybe the Japanese, with their rapidly aging population, are trying to sock their profits away in American investments even though it means short-term sacrifice. Someday they'll have to start importing, but before then they can build a big endowment of overseas investments that will help pay their big, looming pension bill. Or maybe the Japanese truly reject the "creative destruction" theory of capitalism, since they mourn the destructive part (lost jobs and markets) much more than they welcome the creativity (higher standard of living). In the two years of *endaka* the Japanese press has harped endlessly on the misery of "small and medium size enterprises," which are being squeezed out of their traditional export markets. Last summer I visited a few of these companies, including a knife factory in Seki. In a tin-roofed, junk-filled shed in the mountains I saw Japanese retirees grinding butcher knives by hand on antique grind wheels. An old man and an old woman were hand-gluing the red plastic sides onto "Swiss" army knives. The plant manager, his eyes practically brimming with tears, was sure I'd share his sorrow about his tragic loss of market share. And yes, it was too bad for him. But by any normal standard this factory should have moved out of Japan fifteen years ago, to Taiwan or India. Much more impressive installations in the United States have been destroyed by Japanese competition. The parallel does not seem to have occurred to anyone in Japan.

Preserving the existing order—continuing to buy soda ash from your school chum—seems more important to Japan than anything else. The two kinds of foreign purchases that have boomed in Japan—tourism, and investment in foreign real estate—are different from other imports in that they pose no competition to anyone in Japan. The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, a distinguished paper comparable to *The Wall Street Journal*, ran an editorial last spring about low consumption levels, and pointed out that letting in more foreign labor would lower the cost of many services. But such a change would be too disruptive, the paper concluded. "Perhaps the high cost of living is the price we pay for social peace and harmony." When they tire of lending money to Americans, or buying real estate, or going on tours, the Japanese have very little to do with their money since they're so reluctant to import. Shares of stock are one thing they can buy, and prices on the Japanese stock

market have been speculated up to stupendous levels. Nippon Telephone traded early this year with a price-to-earnings ratio of 250, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange as a whole had a P/E ratio of 56, about three times higher than that of the New York Stock Exchange. Memberships in Japanese golf clubs are traded on an official exchange; a place in the most prestigious club recently went for 400 million yen, or about \$2.7 million. A headline in *The Wall Street Journal* early this year said, "JAPAN: SO MUCH YEN, SO LITTLE ELSE."

No one can say that it's "wrong" for Japan to be a mercantilist society, piling up its trade profits rather than spending them. No one can say whether Japan will always behave the way it does now. Its biggest companies are rushing to set up factories overseas; unemployment is rising; profits are plunging; the strong yen is having its effect. (If Japan had been more consumer-oriented and willing to "act on price," a gentler shift in exchange rates might have increased domestic spending.) Just before the economic summit in Venice, Japan announced a \$40 billion public-works program to boost consumption. It's conceivable that ten years from now warnings about Japan's chronic surplus will look as premature as warnings about the "petrodollar" glut do now. But unless *endaka* or *kokusaiika* ("internationalization") changes Japan's basic nature, "free trade" will almost certainly mean something like what it's meant for the past few years: big surpluses for Japan, big deficits everywhere else, a big flow of profits out from Japan to buy companies, buildings, Treasury bonds (but not manufactured products), overseas. That near certainty gives us our choice: do we want to end the deficits or do we want to honor free trade? We can't do both.

LIFE AS CHRONIC debtors (which is to say, as free-traders) might not be so bad. It would accomplish de facto what we could never manage officially: the merger of Japan and the United States. Our two economies are complementary (they make and save, we borrow and buy) and so are our natural resources, human talents, and even our foreign policies. The more deeply the Japanese become enmeshed in our society—owning much of the debt, the real estate, the market share—the more of a stake they will have in its well-being. Everyone in the United States feels bad about foreigners "taking over" American build-

ings and companies, but is anyone really hurt? When Japanese investors re-open old American factories, they bring new technology and create new jobs. When they buy real estate, they pay money to the (usually American) owners. Japanese investment has helped push the American stock market to its speculative highs, and has buoyed the real-estate market in New York, Honolulu, Washington, and Los Angeles. Some Americans resent the rising prices, but others enjoy the profits.

Permanent debtor status could also have its drawbacks. America would have less independence of action, since it would have to keep foreign investors calm and confident. Putting the United States on a leash might be better for the world, but we would never choose this course ourselves. As our interest burden mounts, we'll have to slide down to a lower standard of living, consuming less and repaying more. (The Japanese are already underconsuming, of course, but they have never done otherwise.) And sometimes debt gets out of control, leading to inflation, panic, collapse.

If consumer welfare remains our goal, the United States would do best to stick to the free-trade route, despite the "de-industrialization" and debt. Restricting trade always means higher prices. We can resolve to work harder, teach our children more math, become more "competitive," all the while recognizing that Japan will never love our exports as much as we do theirs. But if we decide that continued debt is too dangerous, we'll have to go beyond "competitiveness." We'll need to change the rules.

This does not mean making Lee Iacocca speeches about the perfidious Japanese. They're simply doing what comes naturally to them. American politicians have been quoted in Japan as warning that trade sanctions would be the "equivalent of the A-bomb" or "really winning the war." The Japanese are too smart to let themselves be caught saying that a new car or computer chip of theirs will be the "equivalent of the Bataan Death March." In an editorial last spring *The New York Times* urged America to "badger them relentlessly for more access to their markets. . . ." What's the point of badgering them at all? Threats not backed up by action annoy the Japanese, make America look weak and nervous, and leave the bothersome trade patterns unchanged.

Instead of yelling and badgering, we should decide precisely what bothers us

about the trade balance and then act calmly, without noise or threats, to change the rules where we think we must. Are we mainly worried about the overall trade balance? The Gephardt amendment, which would require sanctions against nations with chronic export surpluses, enjoys almost no respectable support, but it would force Japan to moderate its mercantilist behavior. Do we think there's too much foreign investment? We can limit it, as Japan has. Japan makes it hard for foreign companies to move in and set up wholly owned subsidiaries. Foreign investment in the United States would seem to help us, by bringing new technology and jobs. But if we feel that it's a threat, let's not yell at the Japanese; let's imitate them, with a change of investment rules.

Do we worry that Matsushita and Nissan will keep all the high-grade manufacturing work back in Osaka and Zama, leaving American workers to bolt parts together from a kit? The rising yen will put pressure on the Japanese to shift whole operations overseas; but if we're concerned, let's pass local-content laws.

Do we seethe about all the areas where American firms are competitive but are being frozen out of Japan? Let's not give speeches urging a more open attitude: when Japanese society does open up, it will be for its own reasons. Let's simply deny it markets reciprocally. For years American shipping firms complained about Japanese rules on "high cube containers"—the large metal boxes that are hauled across the country as truck trailers, loaded on ships, and unloaded in another port. Japan claimed that American containers were too big and dangerous; they had to be unloaded and their contents repacked in Japanese containers on arrival. The speeches and complaints went on; the Japanese stuck to their guns. But last year the U.S. Federal Maritime Commission started investigating the effect of Japanese restrictions, with a thinly veiled threat to restrict Japanese shipments to the United States in retaliation. Japan modified its rules, but after American shippers said the changes made no practical difference, the commission pursued its investigation. Recently the Japanese issued further-relaxed guidelines.

Stated that way, the story may seem to have a bully-boy moral, which is not my point. It's juvenile and dangerous to think that if we just get tough with the Japanese (or Russians), we can make them back down. The point is that in

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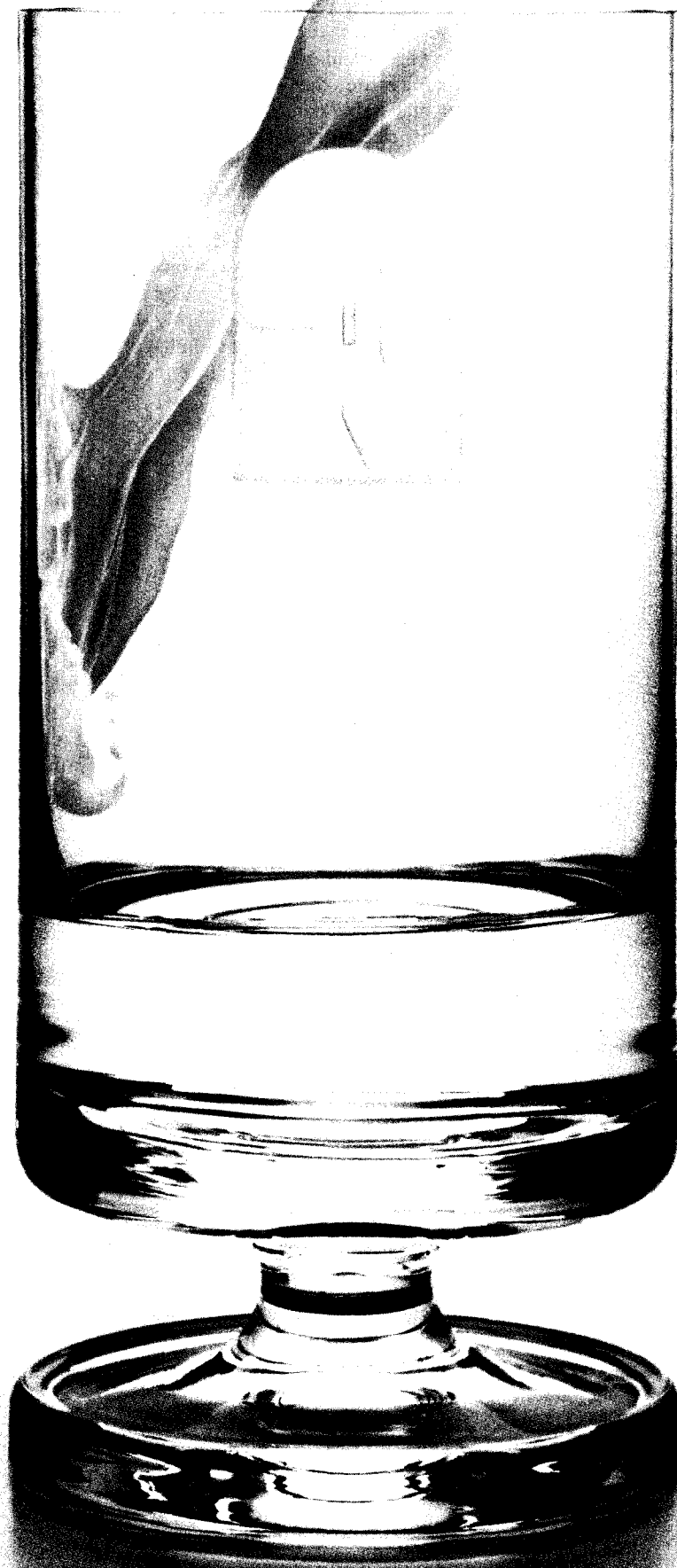
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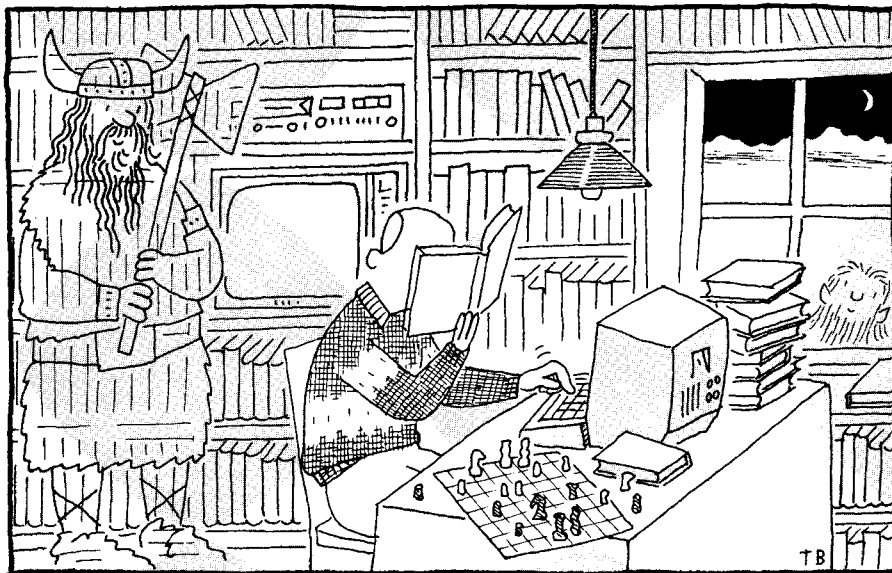
this case, without speeches, our government changed the rules; without rancor, the Japanese adapted. The more typical pattern is for our politicians to yell at the Japanese, without changing the rules. We've yelled because we're uneasy about the deficits, but we haven't done anything, because it would hurt us as consumers and impinge on free trade.

Let's be clear about it: changing the trade imbalance *will* hurt us as consumers, because consumers' interests always suffer from any restriction on trade. Nonetheless, even the United States, consumer heaven, has restricted trade when free trade threatened other values. Child labor would make household help affordable again; totally unlimited immigration would probably take three dol-

lars off the bill for a standard restaurant meal. Product-safety laws make everything cost more. Yet in all these cases our laws recognize that not even Americans live by the "standard of living" alone.

We may feel the same way about trade: that stable communities, predictable jobs, freedom from foreign interference, matter more than the best value for our money. If so, we can change the laws, mandating a different trade balance—and a lower standard of living. The Japanese have made a choice for their society, and we should make one for ours. That's better than thinking that we can talk the Japanese into behaving more like us, or relying on "free trade" to reach equilibrium again.

—James Fallows



ICELAND

A NONESUCH PEOPLE

With some success, Icelanders are fighting to remain themselves

ICELAND IS A PLACE that seems to generate both superlatives and a people with an appetite for documenting them. Everywhere a visitor goes, he meets statistical boasts and curiosities. Reykjavik is the world's northernmost capital. Its average winter temperature is higher than New York City's. Iceland contains Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, which is as big as Rhode Island and Delaware combined. Iceland was the last country in Europe to be settled. (The first settlers are believed to have

been troglodytic Irish monks who arrived around the sixth century A.D. and mysteriously vanished before the year 1000.) Politically, it is the newest country in Europe. (Full independence from Denmark was not achieved until 1944.) It is also geographically the newest country in Europe: roughly one third of the lava that has spilled from the earth in the past five hundred years has emerged from Icelandic volcanoes. Iceland has the highest per capita number of chess grand masters in the world. It has the highest proportion of VCRs to households in the world. Icelanders have the highest life expectancy of any nationality (a contention disputed by many, including the Japanese). Icelanders have the highest literacy rate in the world (again disputed by the Japanese). And—a superlative evidently not open to question—Iceland publishes more books per capita than any other country.

I came across the statistic about VCRs a few years ago in an airline magazine, while I was descending toward an empty, scarred landscape that included a glint from the distant Snaefellsnes peninsula, to whose glaciated steepes and fissures Jules Verne sent Professor Liedenbrock and his nephew Axel in search of the crater that would start them on their journey to the center of the earth. The statistic about book publishing, on the other hand, is one that I have encountered many times during my visits to Iceland, and not merely from travel brochures or the staffs at tourist-information centers. One hears it from shopkeepers, farmers, businessmen. Icelanders are manifestly proud of their literary tradition, and protective of it. Sigurdur A. Magnusson, a poet and novelist, and the author of numerous books about Iceland, exults in being a harsh critic of the trends of modern life. "I worry all the time," he told me recently, as we sat in the living room of his Reykjavik apartment. "You know, I see the French, and how zealous they are about protecting their culture, and I get angry at my countrymen. We need to be equally zealous—more so. When I see the French talking about 'cultural imperialism,' I say to myself, Why aren't we fighting that more vigorously in my own country?"

"Cultural imperialism" is a phrase I have heard frequently in Iceland, along with various calls for resistance to it. What gives this situation special poignance and drama is the smallness of the country that would protect itself. In France, say, any invasion by the English language, or the American fast-food chain, or the Hollywood movie, must come up against the bulwarks of a culture whose resources are deep, multiple, and long-standing. And France's population—of 55 million—is more than two hundred times greater than Iceland's. Just how tiny Iceland's population actually is may go unperceived by the average tourist, who is likely to while away a brief stay within the clogged streets of Reykjavik. Although Iceland is one of the world's largest islands (it is about the size of Kentucky), its population of 240,000 is smaller than, say, that of Birmingham, Alabama, or Mississauga, Ontario.

Iceland seems to have accumulated only barely enough people and affluence to participate fully in the cultural and social activities that characterize modern European life. Were it much less popu-

lous, or poorer, its people probably could not hope to speak of full "cultural independence" at all. But unlike its two nearest neighbors—Greenland, to the west, with a population of about 53,000, and the Faroe Islands, to the east, with a population of about 45,000—Iceland has the cultural and commercial wherewithal to support a professional symphony orchestra, an opera company, a number of public theaters and a pool of playwrights to nourish them, a university, an extensive state broadcasting system, a busy international airline, and a national film company. Inevitably, such cultural breadth in so small a country has meant that many of the arts are, in Sigurdur Magnusson's words, "a bit thinly spread." Until this century Iceland had almost no tradition of painting, sculpture, architecture, instrumental music, or theater. It is no wonder, then, that Icelanders feel so vulnerable to what they sometimes call the Anglo-Saxon invasion—that stream of American and British television programs which spills into their homes night after night.

This is an invasion that has occurred in distinct, controversial waves. In the early 1960s Reykjavik residents began buying televisions in order to pick up broadcasts from the military base at nearby Keflavik. Although technically a NATO installation, Keflavik is often called the American base, since the vast preponderance of its soldiers have always been Americans. The presence of foreign soldiers on Icelandic soil has itself been a source of fierce debate ever since the end of the Second World War, when many Icelanders had hoped to see all foreign military personnel withdrawn. The unchecked presence of American television was therefore perceived in some quarters as an additional incursion, and the State Broadcasting Service (SBS) was inaugurated largely as a defensive response to it. Although its broadcasting hours were quite limited (with no daytime and no Thursday offerings), the state-run channel proved widely popular. The Keflavik channel was eventually confined to the base, and so for a time SBS enjoyed a virtual monopoly on broadcasting. Then, in the 1980s, videocassette rental outlets began to spring up, not only in Reykjavik but also in every tiny fishing village in the country. The government's television monopoly was effectively broken, and an onrush of American movies, crime shows, and situation comedies fol-

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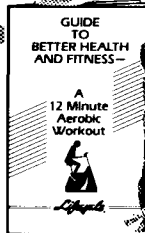
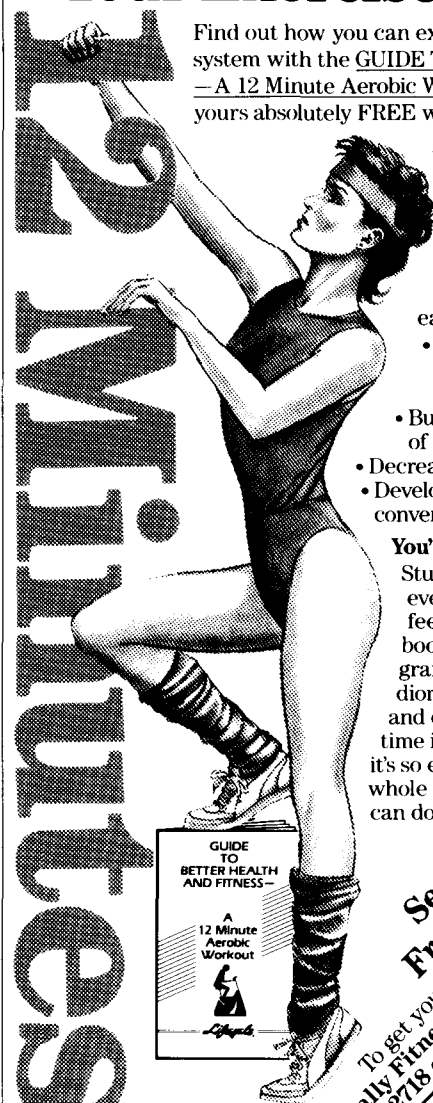
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lowed. The state monopoly was formally dismantled in October of 1986, with the advent of Channel Two, the first private television station in Iceland. Daytime and Thursday broadcasting had arrived.

Given the country's long, sunless winters and frequently impassable roads, television was destined to have an enormous impact on Icelandic society, and the debate between the advocates of "freedom of the airways" and those of "protection from cultural imperialism" has been bellicose. But in Sigurdur Magnusson's mind, the choices are one in their most significant effect: "Any sort of television viewing is going to take people further and further from the Sagas."

THE VARIEGATED collection of anonymous tales grouped under the heading "Sagas" (literally, "things said") is a central, defining element of Icelandic culture. The earliest of the Sagas were written in the first three decades of the thirteenth century; most originated during Iceland's literary renaissance, which came a little later, from about 1270 to 1300. The Sagas have bequeathed to the modern Icelander much otherwise unavailable historical information as well as a feel for his culture's medieval past. They have also provided a pool of shared anecdote and expression; modern Icelandic conversation is sprinkled with aphorisms and descriptive phrases drawn from the Sagas. To the writer, they serve as a perpetual summons to creation. Sigurdur Magnusson says, "There are days when I ask myself, Why the hell am I writing in Icelandic? I write English tolerably well, and have even written books in it. Icelandic will be dead in a hundred years. But there are other days when I think, No, it will change a lot, but the language of the Sagas will survive."

There are those who argue that the Sagas are in fact more often alluded to than read. One American I met, who had worked in Iceland for a number of years, was quite skeptical: "They'd have you thinking that in the evenings they're all reading Sagas by candlelight. Well, that's just not so." Other visitors to Iceland have come away, often ecstatically, with quite a different impression. Travel books about Iceland abound with picturesque accounts of sheep farmers observed in huddled discussion of Grettir the Strong, who beheaded the ghost Glam but suffered ever after from a fear of the dark; or of fishermen observed in

good-natured, schnapps-fueled disputation as to why, in the year 1011, Njal resisted so little when his house was razed with him and his family inside it. Whatever the truth as to how frequently the average Icelander turns for pleasure to the Sagas, they remain a source of national pride. An Icelander admits to ignorance about Grettir or Njal only with reluctance.

The Sagas were written in Old Norse, the language of Iceland's first permanent settlers, the Norwegians, who arrived in their Viking ships in the ninth century. The bold reach of the Viking conquests for many centuries gave Old Norse a far-flung currency, and probably fostered among the anonymous authors of the Sagas, geographically dispersed as they were, a sense of being part of an extended literary community. Sigurdur Magnusson writes in his book *Northern Sphinx*: "The Norse language, which is spoken in Iceland today with very slight modifications, was thus for a time a 'world language.' It was spoken all over Scandinavia, and at the courts of the Scandinavian rulers in England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Russia. It was the recognized language of the Emperor's bodyguard in Byzantium. And it was the first European language spoken on the shores of America." While Old Norse underwent upheavals and transformations elsewhere in Europe, in Iceland it was passed along intact from generation to generation. The result is that the Sagas, masterpieces written in a world language when it was already somewhat past its meridian, are now directly accessible only to some quarter of a million people whose mother tongue is the oldest living language in Europe.

Iceland officially converted to Christianity in the year 1000—two or three centuries before the Sagas were written. But many of the events they chronicle antedate the conversion, and in their atmosphere and language, as well, they often recall the earlier, pagan world of Thor and Odin and Loki. Iceland's medieval poetry and Sagas provide us with our only substantial body of pre-Christian Teutonic lore and belief, and in their various translations and transmutations they have shaped culture throughout Europe. It appears that Shakespeare, for example, borrowed the tale of Hamlet from the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, whose source must have been Icelandic. So much of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungen* draws on Icelandic sources that one has difficulty

envisioning its existence without them.

The Sagas stand in Iceland as a surprisingly proximate and yet poignantly unreachable monument. Theirs is an apical greatness—born of the one irrecoverable moment in the nation's history when it was a literary center of Europe. The modern citizen of Reykjavik, no less than his counterpart in Rome or Athens, knows the thrilling reverberations of a distant golden age—even if, in the Icelander's case, it is one whose monuments endure not in marble and alabaster but in heaps of inscribed, age-darkened calfskins.

This sense of a vanished cultural heyday may be connected to a common impression in Iceland of a more recent decline. Among literary people one finds a pervasive suspicion that earlier generations manipulated the language with greater agility and freshness. Sigurdur Magnusson, who links linguistic decline to the growing influence of film and television, says, "Ours is a very difficult language, and a very intricate one, and people don't have the command of it they used to. They are losing control of its intricacy and they are simplifying it." Thorbjorn Broddasson, the country's leading expert on the media, says, "If you read what people, often people without formal education, were writing around the turn of the century, you often find an extremely beautiful, fluent, and rich language. You see much less of this now. The language is becoming flattened and less varied."

MUCH AS THE Sagas clarify and enrich Iceland's past, the works of Halldor Laxness animate its present. Well before he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1955, Laxness had become a figure of towering importance to the Icelandic nation. Steinunn Sigurdardottir, one of the country's best-known younger poets, says of Laxness, "He really is a kind of god here. His effect is everywhere. Not just in our books but in little things, like dress. Among our artists we haven't had much of a tradition of bohemian dress, and that's just because of Laxness—because he is such a dandy."

Now in his mid-eighties, Laxness lives a few miles outside Reykjavik, not far from where his family farmed when he was a child. He has stopped writing in the past few years, and his speech has slowed, but he still conveys a sense of great authority—though it is cushioned these days by a beaming affability. He

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has reconciled himself to a number of things that once enraged him, including the Keflavik military base. His anecdotes range over the globe, for he was a peripatetic man in youth and middle age. Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg (where he lived in a Catholic monastery) Italy, the Soviet Union (where he wrote of communism with an enthusiasm he later regretted), the Far East, the United States . . . He is fond of recalling his friend Upton Sinclair, a "good man but a very bad writer," and Ernest Hemingway, whose *A Farewell to Arms* Laxness translated into Icelandic. The two men never met, but, according to Laxness, Hemingway would occasionally telephone from thousands of miles away to impart some choice gossip about the workings of the Nobel selection committee. And Laxness remembers W. H. Auden, who first visited Iceland in 1936, sauntering around Reykjavik with a piece of shark in his pocket, because he "wanted to smell fishy."

A penchant for the outrageous and a joyful urge to shock still enliven Laxness's conversation. He has described himself as "the most hated man in Iceland." He had been resented for years, he boasted, for revealing the rude facts about Icelandic life not only to his countrymen, who wish to romanticize themselves, but, worse still, to the rest of the world. (Laxness has been translated into thirty-five languages.) Although he wrote of the countryside, there is little of the conventionally pastoral in Laxness's work; there is certainly nothing swainlike about his coarse, blaspheming shepherds. He sought to represent life as it was actually lived, or endured, in the farmers' cold, dark, low-ceilinged, tubercular turf houses.

In his epic novel *Independent People* (which, for all of Laxness's happy claims to being execrated, is probably the best-loved novel in Iceland) he recounts the tale of a proud, doomed farmer, Bjartur of Summerhouses, whose almost impenetrable brusqueness is tempered by a taste for composing *rimur*—traditional verse that, at least in Bjartur's hands, was "technically so complex that it could never attain any noteworthy content." Bjartur lives in the twentieth century, but the modern era, with its world wars, hardly impinges upon him, save in the fluctuating demand for wool and mutton. In Bjartur's household lives an ancient woman who cooks over a fire (she has never seen a stove) and whose voice, as she chants snippets of verse, goes

back to the age of the Sagas. In the course of his long life Halldor Laxness has had the chance—a rare and wonderful opportunity for a writer, and especially singular for a European—to record his country's passage out of the Middle Ages into an era of supersonic military planes and home computers.

The signs of modern life perch lightly on Iceland. From downtown Reykjavik, with its luxury hotels and hamburger stands, its international franchises like Benetton and Laura Ashley and Mothercare, one need drive for only a few minutes to reach an uninhabited and all but uninhabitable terrain of fiercely contorted lava fields. Much of the interior of Iceland is an unrelievedly gray desert, so lunar in appearance that in the sixties NASA sent crews of astronauts out into it to simulate the conditions of a moon landing.

Iceland has always been peopled only along its edges. Its fishermen may venture out upon the sea, and its farmers pursue their flocks deep into the interior, but in the end Icelandic communities hug the island's rocky shore. The economy has lately expanded beyond fish and wool to encompass a range of high-tech industries, but life is still lived on the sites of the old coastal villages. The interior, with its glaciers and lava fields, its deserts, volcanoes, crevasses, and flash-flooding rivers, supports little human life—and almost no animal life. On my first trip to Iceland, in the summer of 1984, I hiked for a week and a half in the interior and was amazed to pass whole days without spying a single animal larger than a spider. No rodents, no fish, not even a cruising bird in the limpid sky.

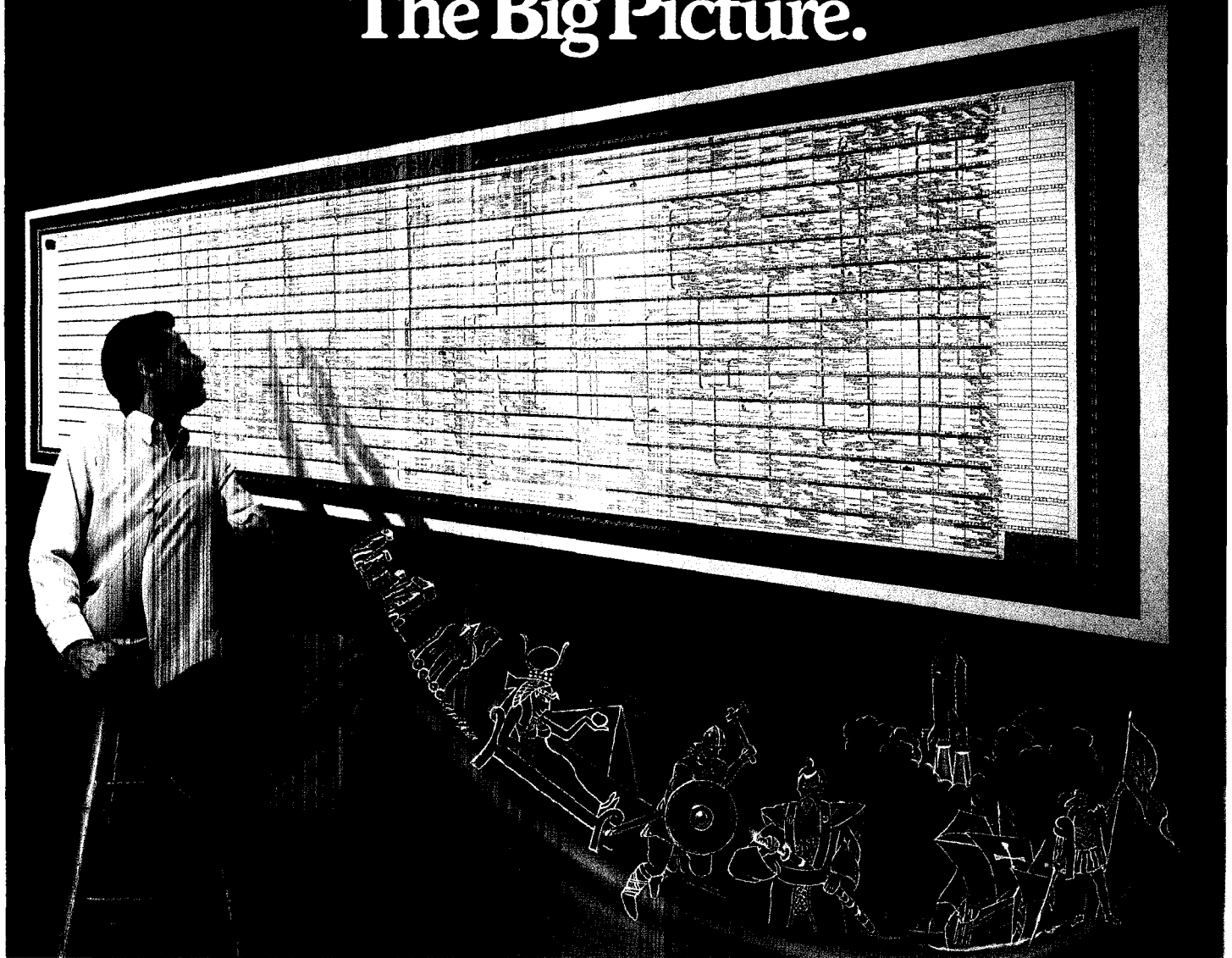
The interior's fascinations are diverse—rhyolite hills, ice caverns, black-snouted glaciers, echoing cataracts, steaming sulfuric hot springs—but they share an elemental ruggedness. If dulcified here and there by sugary patches of cottonweed and low-lying clumps of pink moss campion, and everywhere by a pure, unstinting northern light that Auden thought "the most magical light of anywhere on earth," Iceland remains a pretty spooky place. The landscape may help to explain why Icelandic lore abounds in supernatural beings—trolls, elves, ghosts, water cows. And perhaps because the island lies just south of the Arctic Circle, where it endures some twenty hours of unbroken darkness during the shortest days of winter, the pull of the supernatural remains strong. Farmers still routinely leave patches of

hay unown where "hidden folk" are thought to live, and a few years ago a road was rerouted in order to leave an elf colony undisturbed. Palmistry thrives. Mediums and spiritualists fill Reykjavik auditoriums.

A SENSE OF RAPID turnover, so prominent an aspect of modern Icelandic life, is encouraged by climatic and soil conditions that ferociously conspire to raze whatever buildings one erects. Because the country possesses no easily workable building stone, and almost no timber except driftwood, traditionally the only practicable home for most farmers was the turf house, which requires constant upkeep. An abandoned farm—of which there are many in this rapidly urbanizing nation—dissolves speedily into the earth. As the towns began to flourish, houses were constructed first of corrugated metal and then of concrete. Either way, the effect is often dreary. But if Icelandic architecture is far from handsome, its severity and newness creates a faintly surreal and oddly satisfying contrast to the terrain. In Reykjavik one finds little visual suggestion of historical continuity or of harmony between community and landscape. All of it might well have been set down in the past few months—the clean-angled, boxy houses with their painted, particolored roofs, the seaside warehouses, the red bus shelters, the strings of yellow streetlights. To the Iclander this environmental contrast is rendered still more pointed by the durability of his language.

In the midst of dizzying cultural and social change, the fixity of the language provides constant reassurance that life is not changing *too* quickly. According to Sverrir Hermannsson, the Minister of Culture and Education, "These things—affluence, technology, American films and music—have transformed our society in the last fifty years, but not dangerously, since we have kept our language." Hermannsson became Minister of Culture and Education only two years ago, and at once established himself as an activist—particularly in the area of language preservation. Among the first regulations he worked to implement was one requiring every television broadcast of foreign material to carry either Icelandic subtitles or an overlaid Icelandic commentary. So proficient are most Icelanders in English that a television station might otherwise choose to forgo the expense of subtitling or dubbing. The

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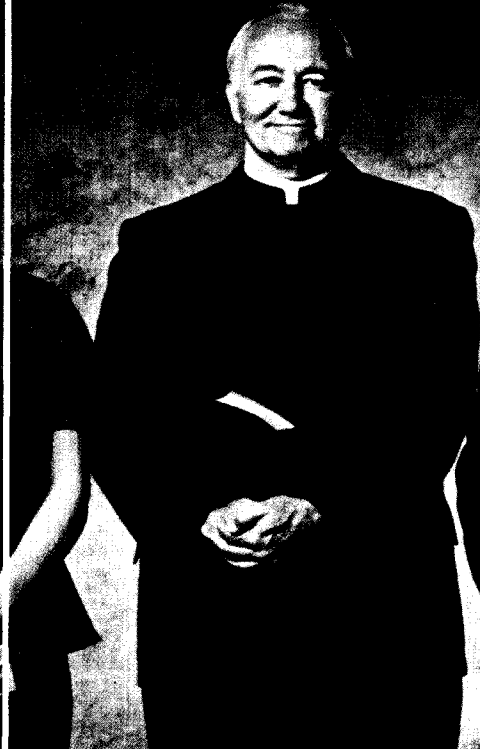
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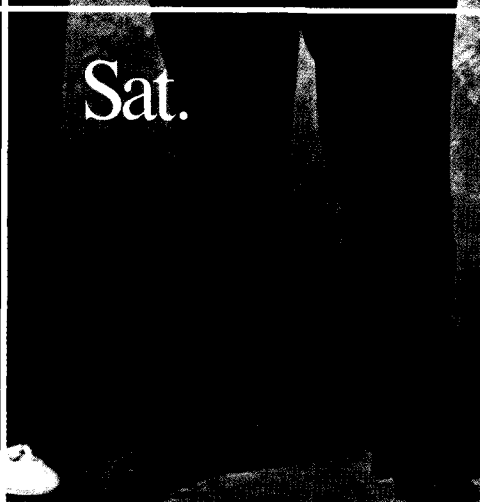
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new regulation was required, Hermannsson says, "because otherwise we would be overrun by English."

The broadcasting regulations are but one of a range of rules designed to protect the language. The most controversial of these are the "name laws." In Iceland patronymics are traditional, and first names are so pervasively employed that even the phone books are organized around them. Icelandic surnames are unstable from one generation to the next. Sverrir Hermannsson's surname is Hermannsson because he is the son of a man whose first name was Hermann; if Sverrir had a daughter named Asta, she would become Asta Sverrirsdottir. The name laws stipulate, among other things, that a newborn child must be christened with a traditional Icelandic name before its birth can be registered. The adoption of a family name—a once popular "Danish" fashion—is proscribed, although those that were in existence before the law's promulgation are permitted. In addition, foreigners granted Icelandic citizenship must renounce their original names and take new, Icelandic ones.

That regulations like these, which would be regarded as infringements of civil liberties in our own country, have been accepted suggests a cluster of attitudes quite divergent from ours in regard to governmental intrusions into everyday life. It is as though Icelanders perceive the most baneful threats to their society as external rather than internal. In any case, Icelanders seem remarkably acquiescent—given the general liberality of their country—about what Hermannsson calls "culture-strengthening" regulations. The laws about liquor, for example, are uncompromisingly strict, perhaps in recognition of the heightened dangers of alcoholism in a land of long arctic nights. The state, which holds a monopoly on the retailing of alcoholic beverages, ensures that sales outlets are few, their hours short, and their prices high. Full-strength beer can be bought only by international travelers passing through Keflavik Airport.

The tolerance, even approval, of regulation is especially in evidence with regard to the Icelandic language. The name laws, for example, extend to the commercial field. A proprietor of a shop or restaurant is generally prohibited from giving his establishment a non-Icelandic name. "But," Gudrun Erlendsdottir told me last summer, "we have not

been quite so firm in this area." Formerly an attorney and professor specializing in family law, Erlendsdottir recently became the first woman appointed to Iceland's Supreme Court. "You will notice that we have these discothèques—like Broadway and Hollywood—and of course these are not Icelandic names. And every week or so, it seems, you see an article in the newspaper saying that such exceptions should not be allowed." Her court appointment was all the more notable in light of her political beliefs; Erlendsdottir is one of the country's most prominent feminists. The changes that feminism has brought to Iceland come vividly to life (as does, once again, the smallness of the population) in some of the statistics she cites. "I was only the fifth woman to become a lawyer in Iceland. The first came in 1934, the second in about 1942, the third and fourth in 1958, and I in 1961. At the university now, between a fourth and a third of the law students are women. And, by the way, not one of Iceland's women lawyers has yet passed away. We're all alive."

"**L**AWS MAY BE useful, but in this field they really cannot do so much," Baldur Jonsson explained to me when I visited him recently. "It must be done by the people themselves."

Baldur Jonsson is the chairman of the Icelandic Language Committee. If the country's diverse efforts to preserve its language have any single center, it is his neat, unimposing office in a one-story house on the campus of the University of Iceland. Jonsson has taught at the university since 1963, although he has had to curtail his teaching duties since he came to the Language Committee, in 1978. He is, he explained, a "philologist, although you might say my field is language planning."

Even in English, his second language (or third or fourth, for he is fluent in Danish and Swedish as well), Jonsson conveys an exceptional precision. A soft-spoken, gray-haired man in his mid-fifties, he commonly meets any inquiry about Iceland or Icelandic with a deliberative pause and a prefatory, slightly apologetic "That's a very difficult question." What he says next, however, shows that he has thought about the question in depth, and has a number of tentatively offered but quite plausible answers.

"No one can explain why Icelandic has remained so stable," he told me. "I suppose there are several factors. First,

we had this very rich literature in common at such an early date. From the twelfth century we've had great written literature in both poetry and prose. And we're geographically separate. You can call it isolation if you want, although I dislike that word. I think it causes misunderstandings. After all, we have not been isolated in the sense of not knowing about other people. It's other people who have been isolated in the sense of not knowing about us. Think about the Viking voyages to North America, which no one 'knew' about for so long. Well, for centuries now every child in this country has known all about them. Another factor is our great social stability. In the year 1800 the inhabitants of Reykjavik numbered about three hundred, and this was the largest town in the country. People lived on farms, century after century, in the same way. And lastly, there has been long-term stability in the population. Of course, this was subject to all sorts of short-term fluctuations."

In the streamlined, cool way that numbers have, the population statistics for Iceland tell a heartbreaking story of recurrent want and disaster. The country grew steadily in its first few centuries. By the year 1100, a little more than two hundred years after the arrival of the first Norwegian settlers, the population had reached about 70,000. Six centuries later it stood at half that figure. Smallpox, the Black Death, famine, and volcanic eruptions had ravaged the settlements. It wasn't until well into the twentieth century that the population reached 100,000. Neither the decline nor the eventual growth owed much to migration.

Over the years the Icelandic language has been protected also by what Jonsson called its "naturally conservative character." He gave two examples. The language is highly inflected, which means that only those foreign words that are adaptable to a variety of suffixes can be imported. And nearly all Icelandic words are accented on the first syllable, which often makes direct borrowing an impossibility. But if the full extent of the language's conservatism must remain obscure to the English-speaking visitor who knows little or no Icelandic, its effect can plainly be seen in a newspaper: I was amazed at how few words I could pick out. Unlike most European languages, which have borrowed large numbers of English words and cognates in recent decades, Icelandic has contin-

ued to turn to native roots when new words were needed.

With the country's increasingly technological economy and cosmopolitan culture, this has meant that thousands of neologisms have had to be found and catalogued. "Often somebody will telephone here and ask for an Icelandic translation of a word, usually an English word, and if I don't know one, we start to discuss possibilities," Jonsson said. "Frequently the result is that the caller will suggest something that seems good. And eventually it may get picked up by the public—or it may not. But in any case, the Language Committee is basically a coordinating organ. We don't make many words. That's often the job of various technological committees, who collect words and discuss them. In

word *skjar* wasn't completely dead. It remained an active word that people knew from poetry, and from songs that we still sing. One must be careful with living words. One must be careful not to do too much of this."

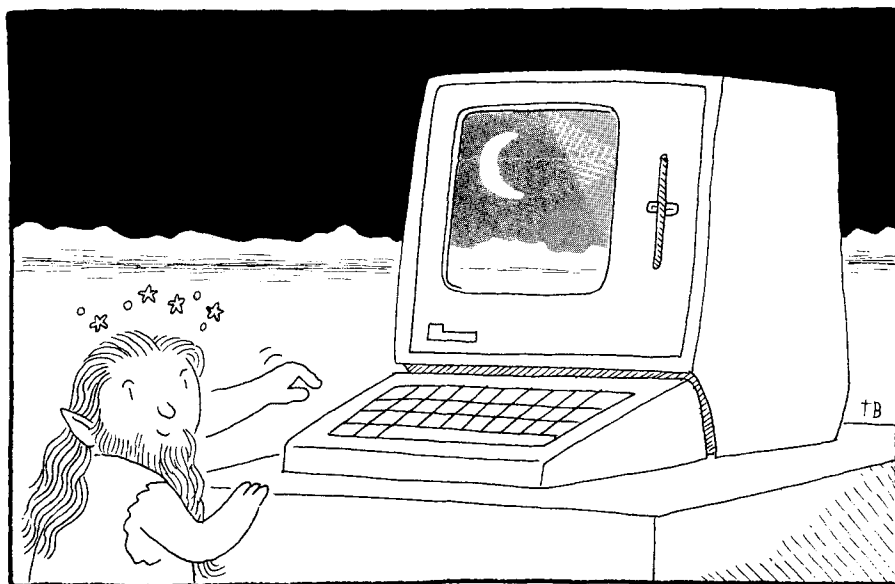
"Incidentally," Jonsson said, "all of our publishing work is done on computers." I observed that there is a fine irony in using new technology for such a conservative function—to which Jonsson responded with another meditative pause. "Conservative? Well, yes and no. I am a modern person. Before I started at the Language Committee, I had worked more or less as a pioneer in linguistic computing. I am working on the improvements of a tool—the tool of the Icelandic language—and the better that tool is, the better the nation. I some-

any Germanic language, you find that it's written in Icelandic. It is anonymous, but we can see that its author was a learned man who knew languages and knew what was going on in neighboring countries. But he never used Latin terminology. He made up his own. So we must ask ourselves, Why in heaven did he do that?"

"Now *this* is the sort of person," Jonsson added, and his soft voice, turning wistful, became softer still, "there should be television programs about."

JONSSON'S PRIDE in the cosmopolitan Joutlook of the anonymous author of the First Grammatical Treatise seems characteristically Icelandic. More than once in my visits I was informed that Icelanders have always been great travelers—that in the Sagas they wandered the world over, from North America to Russia, Turkey, Africa; it is perhaps one more datum in support of a widely favored image of themselves as a none-such people. This small native vanity, and a natural eagerness to dress themselves in mystery, may explain the continuing allure of a bizarre account of their origins. Until recently the orthodox view was that most Icelanders were of Scandinavian extraction, with a small admixture of Celtic blood. Modern anthropological research, taking into account blood types and skull measurements, has suggested that the Irish component may be much greater than previously supposed. A radically different claim based on literary evidence is that modern Icelanders are the descendants of a fair-skinned nomadic people who lived long ago around the Black Sea. This theory was propounded by a professor at the University of Iceland, the late Bardi Guðmundsson, and according to Sigurdur Magnusson, there is at least some linguistic evidence to buttress it. Whether valid or not, the hypothesis creates a beguiling historical symmetry. By means of it, those voyages that Icelanders like Leif Ericsson made to the coasts of North America are balanced by earlier wanderings that led the Icelander back to the Middle East and "the cradle of civilization"; Iceland is given a mediating role in history, a fulcrum position between the Old World and the New. The message for the modern visitor, much as it was for Verne's Professor Liedenbrock and his nephew Axel, is that one comes to Iceland to reach the center of the earth.

—Brad Leithauser



many cases they have found themselves in time with a large glossary, which we have helped to publish.

"These questions can be very complicated. Let's take the word *skjar*, which is now used to designate a computer screen. The word originally referred to a window—a certain type of obsolete window in a turf house. So somebody got the idea of using the word for this new sort of window." Jonsson nods at the personal computer that stands beside his desk. "The danger is that the new word will swamp the old, and alter our literature in the process. Some people think we shouldn't have taken this *skjar* and used it in this modern sense. We terminologize—as it is called—words from the common language. But in certain cases we have to make sure we don't go too far, throwing unwanted associations into our old poetry, for example. This

times compare our language to a tree. Let the tree grow, but without changing so much that the very structure is different. Let it remain the same tree. If we lose our contacts with the Sagas, if we can't read them any more, then we can't read this morning's newspaper, because it is written in the same language.

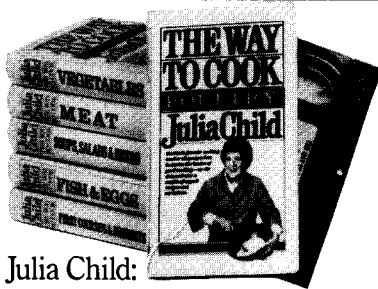
"When the struggle for independence began, in the last century, the purity of the language became a big issue. Always these two things—political independence and linguistic purity—have gone together. We are independent now, and yet we still feel threatened. Perhaps a small nation is always struggling for its independence.

"Actually, Icelanders have always been this way. If you go back to a text we call the First Grammatical Treatise, which was written in the twelfth century, and which is the first phonology in

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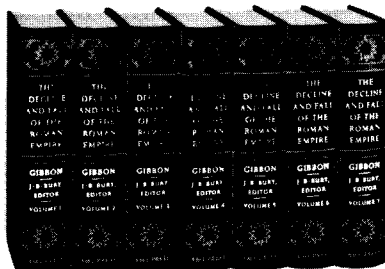
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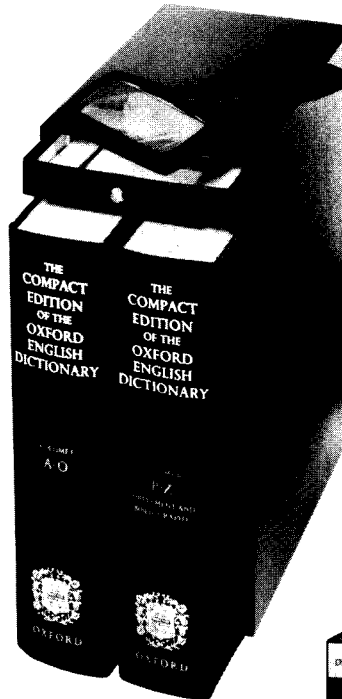
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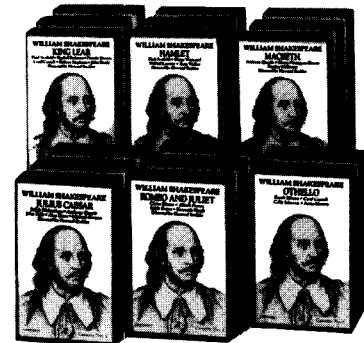


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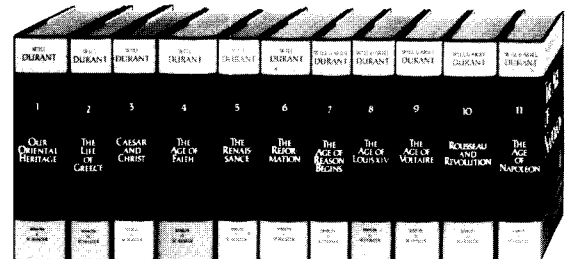
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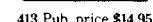
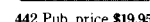
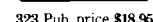
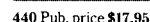
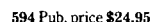
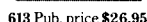
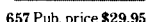
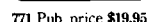
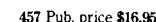
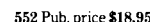
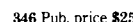
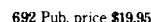
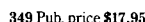
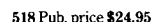
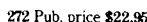
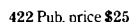
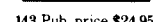
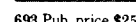
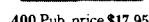
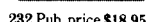
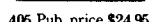
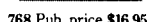
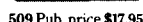
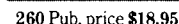
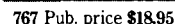
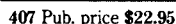
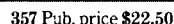
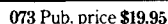
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FLOWERS OF EVIL: ASK CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

BY FRANK GANNON



Q: What annuals are suitable for planting near the ocean?

If sufficient depth of top-soil (seven to nine inches) is provided and you give them sufficient water in dry periods (which drag on and on, furrowing into your soul, often), you should be in pretty good shape to grow almost any annual that strikes your fancy. A tip: don't get hopelessly drunk before you start, and don't approach the project through the miasma of despair. Also, remember the gloves and stay busy.

Q: The crowns of my veronicas are rising above the surface. Can I do anything about this?

Veronicas tend to raise their crowns if they're kept in the same spot too long. They've been stagnant and they're starting to fester; like madmen in the dark, with great wild eyes they are coming to get you, because your corrupted hand should never touch beauty.

If your heart is set on it, move the veronicas in a large soil bag. Then return to your life of error and sin, until you, too, die and fester in a very large soil bag.

Q: Is it all right to trim trees in the winter?

Yes, provided the temperature isn't too low. Also, check the trees. If black regiments of larvae flow out of the trees like a dense, ghastly river, and the stench of death is overpowering, throw the trees away; it's way past trimming time. But bear in mind that you, too, will turn into a rotting mass, to be eaten by vermin. My love!

Q: Which trees and shrubs are suitable for sandy soil in a sunny location?

With proper care, arcadia and tamarisk should do well. Since half of horticulture is visual, you might think about putting one or two vile, rotting corpses, their legs in the air like lustful women's, out there somewhere. Use your own judgment, but I'd give the amount of shade more than a second thought for the corpses. Remember to mulch.

Q: How can I make a medium-size, manure-heated hotbed to get an early start on tomatoes?

Find some long two-by-fours and make a box. The size is up to you, but make sure that it's square. If you can make it voluptuous, that's a plus. Make it rich! Make it triumphant! Make

it corrupt, rich, voluptuous, rich, and triumphant! Make it strange and untamed, and then wet it with your tears of anguish.

Grow your tomatoes earlier than others, and sing of their round red beauty. Sing of your depraved globes and know that they are your brothers! Brothers in pestilence! Oh, your mind and your early tomatoes spring from the very same vine! Use a 2-10-10 general fertilizer—unless you can live comfortably with the idea that you might need more potash.

Q: Should tulip bulbs be taken up each year and separated? Should they be covered with leaves in the fall?

It really depends on where you live. If you live in the Midwest, then I'd leave them where they are for two or three years, unless you're going to use the land for something else—like maybe a few naked black rocks over which flow a great deal of painful personal humiliation, until you lie palsied in your loins.

That's probably a long-term project. Forget the leaves, too. You probably have too much time on your hands, if you're asking questions like that.

Q: Which plants, besides geraniums, can be grown in a small home greenhouse for winter bloom?

When you set out your plants, you will find that a lot of flowers you wouldn't think of can produce winter blooms. But be careful. Studies at Cornell University indicate that if you're like other amateur gardeners, you'll probably wind up staring straight into the grim, still face of death. Go to your greenhouse without love or remorse, amateur gardener. De-bud your chrysanthemums in sin!

Seriously, I'm always eager to help the amateur horticulturalist, because I know his ambitions and his many problems.

As always, yours for good gardening and hideous suffering.

—Charles Baudelaire

REVITALIZING RURAL AMERICA

THE PROMISE OF PARTNERSHIP

By Bob Bergland

I'm from a community in northern Minnesota where the rural electric cooperative stuck its neck out way back in the 1960s to help save a local industry. As a result there are more than 2,500 steady jobs there today.

In fact, all across America's heartland, rural electric people have repeatedly joined forces with other community leaders to help bring jobs to the countryside.

It makes sense. Rural electric systems, 1,000 strong, have built a network of local resources since they first began the job of lighting up the land more than fifty years ago.

Rural electrification was then and is now the product of a special kind of partnership between local leaders, who provide the initiative, organizational skills and hard work, and the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), the federal agency that provides loans, and technical advice.

Today, as the changing face of rural America too often reflects the profound sadness of farm failures and plant closings... as main street businesses shut their doors, we can look to what still seems the miracle of rural electrification. There is every reason to believe that the REA pattern of local-federal partnership is a

key that can open the door to economic revitalization. ■ ■ ■

What does it take to improve the rural economy? One example is Four-County electric co-op in Noxubee County, Mississippi, which, in concert with the TVA, Mississippi State University, development groups and local people, became an agent for change.

Once home for struggling cotton farms and cattle ranches, soaring unemployment and frustration, Noxubee County is finding new promise through united local initiative. With a development strategy covering everything from fighting illiteracy to building roads, there are new commercial ventures, expansion of local businesses, and new jobs. ■ ■ ■

Rural electric cooperatives are part of the heart of the community as well as its muscle. They know what's needed and what works. And while creative work is being done, it's clear that the needs often go beyond the availability of local resources.

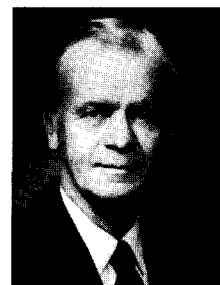
Rural communities need help creating or rejuvenating local institutions that make economic development feasible. They need help transferring new technologies to rural enterprises. They

need flexibility in federal programs based on the recognition that local needs are best determined by local people.

This is not to say that current government programs and adequate funding for them are not important. They are.

But for the long haul, we need rural and community development programs that foster a broader, more constructive federal-local partnership. The pattern is there. Rural electric people are ready to help. The success of rural electrification proves it can be done.

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Bob Bergland,
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La Fayette, put it best when he wrote, "It appears to me, then, little short of a miracle. . ."

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We the People

Article I

Lake Wobegon Stories

LEAVING HOME

BY GARRISON KEILLOR

THE KILLER

IT HAS BEEN A QUIET WEEK IN LAKE WOBEGON. IT WAS cloudy and rainy and pretty chilly, and in a town that's plain to begin with, when it gets wet and cold you lose most of the charm you didn't have in the first place. Some storytellers would take one look at a little town on a cold, wet fall day and tell you about a family on a vacation trip through the Midwest who wonder why this town seems so deserted and get out of their car and there on Maple Street coming at them with a pitchfork is a gigantic man with empty eyes and chunks of his face falling off and big clods of brown dirt stuck to his bib overalls, but I am a storyteller who, for better or worse, is bound by facts, so I simply observe that nobody was out walking because it was raining, a steady discouraging rain. But there were strange cars driving through.

A culvert had washed out and the roadbed had collapsed on Highway 9 just south of the Pet the Deer Park, and the twelve-mile detour led straight past the Co-op grain elevator through town. There was heavy traffic through town, and Skoglund's Five & Dime held a Detour Sale, 10 percent off on all items, and Clifford at the Mercantile put out a sign, FALL EYEWEAR—SLASHED IN HALF—BIG SAVINGS, but nobody stopped. Ten percent is nothing nowadays. And when you put the word *eye* close to the words *slashed in half*—people don't slow down and look for a parking spot, not in a cold, wet little town. They think of the guy with the pitchfork. (Did that sign say BIG SAVINGS or BIG SAVAGE?)

For one morning and two long afternoons Clarence stood in the Bunsen Motors showroom watching the traffic cruise by, imagining a car might stop and a guy get out and say, "I'm looking for a Pinto, two-door, straight stick, no factory air, kind of a dark puke color—like this one right here!" But the cars streamed past, faces peering out the windows, and you could see what they were saying:

"Where is this?"

"How should I know? You still want to stop for coffee?"

"Not here. What is this, anyway? I'm sure glad I don't live here. I don't know how people could stay in a place like this. What a dump. How far to Minneapolis?"

"How should I know?"

COMING HOME FROM A MEETING IN ALBANY, MAYOR Clint Bunsen noticed that the WELCOME TO LAKE WOBEGON, GATEWAY TO CENTRAL MINNESOTA, sign had fallen down sideways, and he sent Bud out to fix it, but when Bud unbolted the one surviving bolt, the sign fell down and broke into three pieces, which Bud hauled back and piled behind the fire barn. He said, "You could nail 'em back together, I suppose, but I donno—" His voice trailed off into a sniff that said, *What's the point of it?* Our town is not shown on maps, so why not be anonymous, too? Nobody thinks we exist anyway. (We've never seen proof of *their* existence, nor much need for it either. But what the hell.)



So the detour passed without benefit and then the trees started to turn color, especially some maples who got overexcited and went bright yellow. It seemed early for fall, considering all the work we have to do before winter. We're not ready for it. Mr. Berge said to Wally in the Sidetrack, "Shees it's been cool out, don't you think? I thought dey said it was supposed to warm up a little, for crying out loud." Wally said, "It's almost October, Berge. It's going to be getting a lot cooler from here on out right through the end of the year and into next. It's

not going to warm up anytime soon."

It's easy for Wally to be a realist. He spends his days in the Sidetrack Tap like a bear in a cave—a cave with green and orange and blue neon beer signs and a bevy of older bears leaning against the bar and belching beer breath. Wally stands in the dark, listening to bears grumbling and mumbling, and he doesn't know much about how the lovely world outside can raise our hopes. How Tuesday morning when the sun briefly shone could excite a person, and how, walking along Elm Street on a morning simultaneously damp and cool and bright and smelling of smoke and sunshine, a person could feel that this was permanent—that God in His grace had removed our town beyond the force of time, beyond change, and placed it on a hill by a blue lake on an eternal perfect day in mid-September where those whom we love will always be as they are now. And then Tuesday afternoon it was dim and rainy

and cold. We felt a cold chill. We wondered if there is a God or is the universe only one seed in one apple on a tree in another world where a million years of ours is only one of their moments and what we imagine as our civilization is only a tiny charge of static electricity and the great truth that our science is slowly grasping is the fact that the apple in which we are part of one seed is *falling*, has been falling for a million years and in one one-millionth of a second it will hit hard-frozen ground in that other world and split open and lie on the ground and a bear will come along and gobble it up, everything, the Judeo-Christian heritage, science, democracy, the Renaissance, art, music, sex, sweet corn—all disappear into that black hole of a bear: that was how Wednesday felt.

A big mood swing, from belief in eternal happiness with a loving God to atheistic nihilism and despair in twenty-four hours in a town of less than one thousand population. Fall is a powerful season.

In fall, when I was young, I thought, "This year I will do better in physics. Study hard, listen, take good notes, and when he calls on me, I'll give the answer in a loud clear voice, and not just a good answer but a brilliant one, possibly an answer that illuminates some dark corner of physics. I'll be not only a good student, I'll be a genius. 'Seventeen-Year-Old Rural Minnesota Boy Poses New Theorem of Light That Proves Doctrine of Justification by Faith—Grace of God Expressed as Mathematical Certainty by Boy Formerly Considered Slow Learner.'"

Then October came and I didn't understand anything. I was scared that he'd call on me and fear made the air around me hot and dry, creating teacher suction, and he drew close to me and said, "Go up and see what you can do," so I stood at the blackboard, looked at the problem, and thought, "God, take this chalk and write the answer. Or make the blackboard fall off and kill me. Please." I wrote a few faint numbers and the smart kids laughed. He said, from the back of the room: "We talked about this last week, Mr. Keillor! I assumed you were paying attention! Your eyes were open, as I recall! Your head was up off the desk!"

One fall, years ago, I was elected president of Young People's Bible Study. In the Sanctified Brethren, there were only five young people total, including Mel, who was thirty-four, but it's an honor, and I promised myself that I would organize our Bible study as never before and prepare the lesson outline early and meditate prayerfully on it, and then one Saturday night I got a last-minute date with *this girl*, and so it wasn't until Sunday morning that I examined Paul's first epistle to Timothy. I had to meditate fast, and when Mel stood up to pray to open Bible study, I thought, "Go long, Mel," and looked down at Paul's exhortation to Tim to avoid false teaching and was thinking how I could develop this thought in such a way as to take up twenty minutes ("Let's start by defining our terms. What do we mean by 'teaching'? By 'false'? What exactly is an 'epistle'?"), when suddenly Mel was praying a strange prayer: "And now, Lord, it's on my heart this morning to

pray for, uh, *one in our midst* who has, uh, taken up with *impure companions* and, uh, neglected Thy precious truths for the pursuit of, uh, *pleasures of the flesh*. Lord, we would ask—" In a group of five people it didn't take much imagination to know who he meant. It wasn't himself, and Larry and Joyce were married, so that left me and my cousin Roy, and Roy didn't have a driver's license. My face burned. Here I was, about to lead Bible study, and Mel was cutting me down in prayer. Maybe I had *pursued* pleasures of the flesh, but I had failed, and didn't that count for anything? We had sat in the car up at the gravel pit drinking Cokes with vodka poured in them, and I had contemplated two or three times the buttons on her lovely blouse, and then she said, in a strange choked voice, "Oh no, oh no," and grabbed for the door and the handle came off, and I said, "What's wrong, Ann?" and she said, "Oh no," and turned toward me. It was her turning toward me that, one moment later, ruined the evening and my good tan corduroy jacket, and now here I was, being prayed for as a backslider and what did I have to show for it? "Lord, touch his heart . . . give him strength to witness for You."

IT WAS OCTOBER, 1977, WHEN MY CLASSMATE MARNIE Montaine (*nee* Barb Diener) returned to Lake Wobegon, the first one in town history to become a movie star. In her honor they combined Homecoming and Halloween to make one big celebration with an afternoon parade and school kids in costumes, and the band stood and played "Anchors Aweigh" under a WELCOME HOME, MARNIE! (BARB) banner as she swept past the crowd in a black dress and red shoes. "Oh, hi!" she said. "Nice to see you again! How are you?" not calling people by their names and looking them straight in the forehead . . . but it was nice. And at the Bijou, Bernie had fixed the magic lantern that made clouds move across the ceiling and put new bulbs in the stars, more than two hundred. Her movie, *The Hand Under the Bed*, was shown to a full house.

Barb Diener had left town for good in 1968 after coming and going for a few years, trying one thing and another. She headed for California and landed in Sonoma and joined a commune that made belts out of feathers and changed her name to Starflower Moonbright and hooked up with a young man named World Anderson. They went to Los Angeles to see the son of a famous singing star, who had promised a recording contract for World's songs, which were mostly humming. He called them Breathing Songs, they were thirty or forty minutes long, and he could perform more of them in an evening than most audiences would choose if it were left up to them. She left World to go with a theater troupe called U, six actors who didn't so much put on plays as stand in front of the audience and confront them with their hypocrisies, and then she got into a jeans ad, and she became Marnie Montaine, and one night in 1974 her family saw her in a TV commercial for Papa's Popcorn, though you had to watch close to see her—she was a kernel, and she popped pretty fast.

She wasn't exactly the star of *The Hand Under the Bed*, either. She played the clerk at the lonely motel who, when the couple arrived on the dark and stormy night and said, "Please. We saw the NO VACANCY sign, but wouldn't you have something—we'll take anything," said, "Well, gee, there's Cabin Eight but we haven't used that—not for thirteen years, since the night—*hey*, isn't this the anniversary of that night when—" and they said, "We'll take it!" That was Barb's one and only scene. Bernie ran the film back a couple of times, and people clapped and Barb stood up and made a speech about the movie business and how what looked simple on the screen was actually terribly complicated and how absolutely nice the director, Phil Fontinella, was and he was going to use her in his next picture, a bigger part, and then she said she had to leave, thanks so much, good-bye, you're beautiful, and we all

stood up and clapped—and then we weren't sure what to do.

The show was over, really, but there was an hour left of the movie with the couple and their four children and Cabin Eight, so Bernie started it up and we watched for a while. People died right and left, hacked to death by something lurking just off camera, it was hard to keep track of. The clouds were lovely, though, and the little stars twinkling in the ceiling, just like when I snuck down there with girls and sat in the dark with their moist hand in mine.

Later in the movie you finally see the killer, a guy in bib overalls, pitchfork, empty eyes, face falling off in big chunks, but of course with Barb gone it wasn't that good, so most of the audience left early, except for some young people in the back who were too scared to move and who were trying to be a comfort to each other.

CHICKEN

IT HAS BEEN A QUIET WEEK IN LAKE WOBEGON. IT WAS cool and rainy, no good for farmers to pick corn, so some of them came and sat in the Chatterbox Cafe for a while and tried to take their minds off the weather by telling a few familiar jokes. Roger and Rollie and Harold and Virgil Berge, sitting in the back booth, began with a few clean ones about animals walking into a bar and asking for a drink, and a cannibal joke, and the pig in the apple tree joke, and the ventriloquist who spends the night at the sheep farmer's, and the one about the Norwegian trying to get into heaven. Then Harold started one about a seed salesman who was traveling through. His voice dropped as he came to the part where the lady tiptoes out to the privy in the moonlight and her dog follows her, and everyone leaned in close and Mr. Lundberg and Bud and Russell came and huddled over the booth, waiting to be killed by this beloved old classic, and he said, "So Clarissa seen a petunia growing near the path and bent down to pick it up . . . and the dog, he . . ." And Harold, who has been under a lot of pressure lately, began slowly to explode. He leaked air out of his nose and his ears. He gasped and whinnied, tears running down his face, he grabbed on to the table, out of control, he stood up and motioned to be let out, but they were starting to leak too, and couldn't move. He attempted to climb over them but was too weak. He tried to say the punchline, but it wouldn't come out. So he fell down on the floor and crawled out under the table.

Uncle Al was there, having a bite of meat loaf, a dab of mashed potatoes, a sliver of lemon meringue pie, and a drop of coffee. He told me later, "You know, some people only know how to tell a joke, but Harold knows how to make people laugh."

STRANGE FOR MY UNCLE AL TO EAT IN A COMMERCIAL establishment, seeing as he is married to Aunt Flo, whose cooking can make the lame walk, but this was a cool fall day when we were butchering chickens in their back yard, and Uncle Al is a gentle man who has no stomach for killing. He loves to eat fried chicken but not one whom he knew personally, so he passed a couple of hours up town as the rest of us executed forty-seven chickens that Dad brought in from Uncle Larry's farm the night before. There had been forty-eight chickens, but one got loose when we emptied them out of the gunny sacks into Al's garage to spend their last night. She flew up in my face, a burst of feathers that made me let go, and took off like a bat out of hell. Dad went after her, but he is seventy years old. The chicken tore around the trash barrel and down the alley. The others milled in the garage all night mumbling to themselves—that it wasn't fair that *she* got to go when *they* had to stay, that if *anyone* got to go, then *everyone* should go—and finally the sun came up and a young rooster sang and about nine o'clock we arrived and sat down to have coffee. My mother had been up since four and had drunk three cups of coffee already, on account of a dream in which someone was chasing her. "I always have bad dreams when we butcher chickens," she said.

"Your problem is you drink too much coffee," said my dad. "Coffee makes you sleep light, so a bad dream wakes you up. Me, I sleep right through my bad dreams, they don't bother me at all, not even the worst nightmares."

But it isn't that. My mother feels bad about butchering and so do I. Dad and Aunt Flo are country people, and in the country you do as you like, but



Mother and I grew up in town, so we worry more about what people think, and when you have forty-seven chickens in the garage, you know the neighbors are talking. People in Lake Wobegon don't slaughter chickens anymore, not in their back yards; it's not considered decent. Oh, you might do one or two, in the evening, but forty-seven in broad daylight, a chicken massacre—people would think you're common. People buy chickens at Ralph's, they come in plastic bags, big white cold oblong things.

For our sake, to accommodate squeamishness, Aunt Flo tried to give up butchering and be content with store-bought chicken, but it was against her principles. She cooks to bring happiness, it is part of her ministry, so to put tasteless chicken on the table is to preach false doctrine. She believes in the goodness and worth and beauty of chicken. Any fool can cook a hunk of cow, whack off a slab, slap it on a platter, and call it dinner, but chicken is delicate and has got to be done right. The chickens in the store were pumped full of feed and kept drugged and in the dark, and you could taste the misery of the bird in its meat. Aunt Flo's philosophy is to let them run free, to feed them table scraps and delicacies and talk to them while you feed them, to keep them in chicken bliss right up to the moment their heads hit the block.

Once, on a trip to Minneapolis to visit relatives, she was dragged by them to a swank restaurant where she sat dazzled by crystal and silver and white linen, and ordered . . . chicken—or *La Poulet alla Cacciatore de Jardinera a la Estragon con Piña Colona*—and it was borne to the table in a golden dish and served with a flourish, but underneath the hoopla and publicity was a pitiful corpse of an unhappy creature, which to her represented the wretched dishonesty of these times, and she pushed it aside and decided it would be either vegetarianism or butchering. And there we were on a fall morning about to do business in the back yard.

“WELL,” AUNT FLO SAID, STANDING UP TO RINSE out her coffee cup, “I don't think those chickens are going to butcher each other.”

My mother already had two big pots of water on to boil, my dad had sharpened the ax blade, and out we went, into the wet, cold yard. The chickens fell silent in the garage when the back door slammed. I looked in the alley for the forty-eighth chicken. “Well,” we said, “we might as well get started.”

My parents and Aunt Flo have been butchering chickens since long before I was around to help, so they don't really need me. My dad kills them, my mother plucks them, and Aunt Flo cleans them. When he's done killing,



my dad helps with the plucking, and then they both help clean. My job hasn't changed since I was a child: I help out here and there doing this and that, but mainly my job is to select the chicken and catch its legs with a long wire hook and grab its ankles and carry it to my dad, who takes care of the rest.

When I opened the side door of the garage, a volunteer chicken flew up and I grabbed it and there was the first one. I took it to my dad, turned and walked back to the garage, put my hand on the knob and heard the *whack*,

and went in for the next one.

All the chickens had to die, so it wasn't like I had any real power; I was only a lower-level bureaucrat trying to keep things going smoothly. I didn't have the power of clemency, so why did they look at me that way—why did I feel cheap? I closed the door behind me and stood in the dim light with my hook and work gloves, the chickens milling away from me, and I took a deep breath and snagged one and it cried out, “Oh no, gosh no, please no, don't do this,” and I took it to my dad and handed it over and turned my back, not wanting to watch as this creature who had been alive in my hands just a moment before, now—*whack*—was gone. I didn't want to see the blood or watch my mother at the big boiler on the back step or smell the hot, wet feathers when she dipped the carcass in boiling water, the hiss, the rippling of feathers. Didn't want to look and didn't want the neighbors to see me, so I strolled back and forth from the garage to the block as if I were taking them to the doctor, as the crowd in the garage got smaller and smaller, and then I thought, “You really ought to kill one yourself before they're all gone. This is something you should know how to do if you eat meat, otherwise you better stick to celery. You're dishonest,” I said to myself. “You come from an honest family that faces life and death, but you live like it's a story and you made it up—it's time you become an adult and kill a chicken.” Eight chickens left and then six, and the fifth one, I watched my dad do it.

He's a one-handed butcher. Holds it by the legs in one hand, flops it down, and the ax in the right hand is already up high on the backswing and down *whack* and the head drops like a cut flower and the blood runs out in the dirt. My Uncle Larry paints a line on the chopping block and places the chicken gently down on its belly with its beak on the line and that line hypnotizes the chicken—it lies very quietly staring cross-eyed at the yellow line, thinking about infinity, and then suddenly it stops thinking. Uncle Larry likes to swing the ax with two hands. My dad uses one.

We were down to two chickens unless No. 48 walked in, so when I took out the next to last one, I said, “Maybe I'll do the next one.” Okay, he said. I caught the last chicken.

I was glad to be getting rid of it, the last witness to the massacre. My dad said, "Want me to hold it for you?" I shook my head. My mother said, "You be careful, now." Imagine going to bat against your first chicken, you cut your own foot off and walk funny the rest of your life, a stiff walk, like a chicken.

I got a grip on the chicken's legs and swung it up on the block and hauled off with the ax and hit down hard and missed by two inches. I had to pry the ax out of the wood, and now I was mad. I swung again and down it came dead center *whack* and at the same time I let go and the chicken took off running. It had no head. It dashed across the yard and out in the street and was gone—I never saw a chicken move so fast. I guess without the extra weight they can really go.

My dad explained afterward that when I missed the first time and planted the blade in the block, the blade got hot. So when I cut the chicken's head off, the blade cauterized the wound and stopped the flow of blood, and you had a running chicken in pretty good shape except with no brain.

We took off after it down the street and around the corner and up and across the neighbor's yard. A high-speed chicken. It raced through flower beds and bounced off fences, pure energy, no thought, kept going—fast. Ran over two little kids in a sandbox. Ran past a couple of dogs

who looked up and decided not to get involved with it. My dad and me trotting along far behind. We heard the squeal of brakes when two cars stopped and the headless chicken tore across Main Street by Bunsen Motors, just as Harold came tottering out of the Chatterbox Cafe, weak from his privy joke. It sped past him and he vowed to give up coffee from now on. It went up behind the cafe toward Our Lady church, losing speed. Mrs. Mueller was standing by her garbage can and she has a face that would stop a clock. It slowed down the chicken to where she was able to trip it and grab it. She took it in and rebutchered it and plucked and cleaned it and put it in her fridge, but my dad and I didn't know that until hours later. So when we came wheezing along the alley and saw a chicken walking toward us with its head on its shoulders, we were momentarily confused.

It was the forty-eighth chicken, of course, and we chased it in behind the church and cornered it against the fence and snatched it and took it home. Then Mrs. Mueller called. We said, "You can keep it." We put on a pot of water to boil and drove out to a cornfield my dad knows about where it's shady and the corn has matured more slowly. We picked three dozen ears of sweet corn and raced home to the boiling water and put in the ears and had a wonderful vegetable dinner with potatoes and beets and some squash. It was delicious. That was Thursday. I imagine that tomorrow we may try some fresh chicken.

A TRIP TO GRAND RAPIDS

IT HAS BEEN A QUIET WEEK IN LAKE WOBEGON. IT WAS chilly on Tuesday and Wednesday, as a cold front moved through, and the tomato growers stayed up late debating whether to cover their plants for frost or not. "Naw," they decided about ten o'clock, and hit the hay and lay thinking about it. The humiliation of getting froze out, the shame of eating store-bought tomatoes, or worse, going on tomato relief. "Here, Clarence, have a couple bushels of these—we got plenty. No, really. Bud covered ours that night in June, of course, when it froze—you remember—it was that night, you could tell by the birch leaves it was going to get below freezing. . . . You didn't know that?"

It rained Wednesday night. Roger Hedlund lay worrying about his unplanted corn and thinking about his daughter Martha's new black kitten. Roger had laid down the law that cats stay outdoors, even when it's cold, that's what it has fur for, put it outside, it'll take care of itself. She looked up at him, pleading. He said, "Now. Just do it." She put the kitten out. On her way upstairs she whispered, "Murderer." He heard her. When he went up to bed, he heard the kitten crying on the back step. "Well," he thought, "it'll go away." It cried pitifully and then it did go away, and after a while he went out to look for it. "Kittykittykittykitty." He walked naked except for his long T-shirt, barefoot across the cold, wet grass, his big dog, Oscar, with him. He pulled the T-shirt down to make himself

decent, and thought he heard the kitten under the house. Bent over to look, and Oscar sniffed him. Roger jumped straight into the side of his house, hitting the faucet with his thigh. He groaned and sat down in the grass. *Ohhhhhhh.* And saw the flashlight. "Dad?" she said. "Dad? Is that you?"

"Go back to bed," he said. "Everything is all right." But his voice sounded funny, like a man who'd run into a faucet. "What's wrong, Dad? Are you all right?"

No, he wasn't. Much later he was not so bad, after the pain subsided and he had a shot of bourbon, but he wasn't all right. He lay awake listening for the kitten. He fell asleep, and in his dreams something chased him to hell and back—it might have been a cat. In the morning the kitten came back. Martha said, "Don't you think it'd be less trouble if we kept him in the house? Then you wouldn't have to get up in the middle of the night and go find him, Dad. You see if you keep something . . ." All right, he said. "If you keep something indoors, then you know where it is." All right, he said, we'll try it and see how it works.

Thursday night he was glad the kitten was in. It rained buckets, one of those summer thunderstorms when the sky turns black and clouds boil up and the wind blows the grass flat. Trees bend in half and sheets of rain fall like in the Old Testament, and then it's over.

The wind took hold of the Quaker State Oil sign at Krebsbach Chev, the one that hung on the Pure Oil sign,

and ripped it from the bracket and whipped it down Main Street like a guillotine. It sliced into the ground in front of the Unknown Norwegian and buried itself halfway in. When it came whistling down the street, Mr. Lundberg had just emerged from the Sidetrack Tap to make sure his windows were rolled up. The wind almost bowled him over and then he heard a hum like a UFO and ran inside. It was the sign whizzing past, so fast he saw only a blur, it could've cut someone in two. Such as him, for example. He is a hefty man and half of him would be almost as much as all of just about anyone else you could think of, but that sign would've done the job. It had not been a good week for him anyway, and then to get sliced in two on top of it—not a week you'd care to live through again.

THE RAIN WAS GOOD NEWS FOR LAWNS AND GARDENS. Some of them turned so green, you look at them and see green for the rest of the day, your kids look green, your food, even your thumb.

Some kids turned green Friday night after the Junior-Senior Prom. The theme was "Caribbean Escapade," and the gym was decorated to look like a beach house under palm trees and an illuminated tropical moon. And a Plexiglas lagoon on a night in June. With a macaroon by the old spittoon. Couples of seventeen-year-olds in evening dress, dancing close, and the visions of elegance led to delusions of invincibility when the bottle was passed in the parking lot. Some kids learned that although vodka and apple juice is tasteless going down, it's quite memorable on the return trip. That night, in and around town, a few sailors had to weather heavy seas. If any preachers had been awake at 3:00 A.M., they could've converted them to temperance, Methodism, Masonry, yoga, or Japanese yen: the fields were ripe for harvest.

The rain was more than farmers needed and came at the wrong time, keeping them out of the fields, and now planting is late. Farmers are in enough trouble as it is, and even if they could run the weather as they please they still might not make it. Roger got so nervous he couldn't sit down for two minutes. He'd start to say something, jump up in the middle, look out the window, and forget what he had said. Cindy said, "You're driving us crazy. Let's get out of here. You can't do anything until it dries up, so let's go away and do something this weekend." He said, "You must be crazy." "No," she said, "not yet."

Leave before we get the corn in? "We'll go to Grand Rapids and stay with my sister," she said. What about Cathy and Martha? "They're old enough," she said. "It's only for a couple of days." "Yeah," the girls said, "you need a break, Dad. You ought to go."

It was the eagerness in their eyes that Roger kept think-

ing about as he and Cindy drove north toward Grand Rapids, Thursday evening, and how pleasant his girls were, how helpful as they saw their parents out to the car. "Here, Dad, let me carry that. In you go. Okay, you two have a good time and *don't worry about us*." Driving north, he could hear Cathy's voice saying, "Don't worry about us, don't worry about us," and just north of Aitkin he turned around and headed south. "Are you crazy?" Cindy said. "Yes," he said. "As the father of two teenage daughters, I'd be crazy not to be crazy."

When they turned onto the country road a half mile east of their place, they noticed more cars than you normally see, all heading west. They came over the hill. Up ahead their house was blazing with lights. All the traffic was turning in at their driveway. They could hear the music quite clearly from the road as they cruised past.

"You don't want to go in?" she said.

Roger said, "I don't know. Maybe it's something we don't want to know about."

"Then let's turn around and forget we ever saw this, whatever it is, God help us. I hope it isn't what I think," she said.

At the crossroad he parked on the shoulder and they got out and looked at the farm. Across the muddy field with so much standing water, the house looked like a cruise ship with a big party on board. More cars drove up the gangplank.

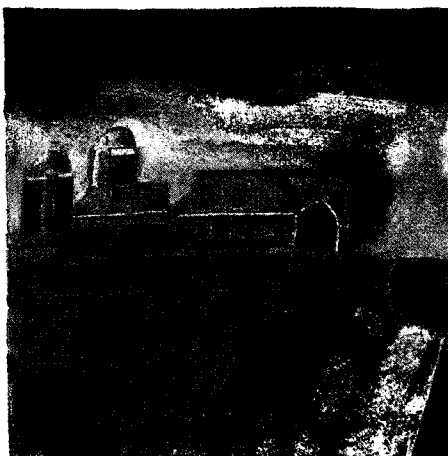
"Probably it's not what we think," she said. "If we're going to trust them, then we have to trust them and not go around spying on them to see if they do what we want or not."

"I'm curious. I'm going over and see what's going on. Want to come?"

"Of course I do," she said.

It was hard going. They took off their shoes and socks and waded through mud up to their ankles, straight across the field into the dark toward the carnival in their farmyard. Headlights, loud music: he didn't know there were this many teenage kids in the county. They got to the edge of the windbreak. It didn't seem like their place with the music blasting. Voices screeching, drums pounding. "My gosh, they're going to kill the chickens," she said. She looked in the coop, and the chickens did look dazed. Some of the hens seemed to be turned upside down in their nests. Where was Oscar, the faithful watchdog? Oscar who goes crazy when the mailman turns around in the yard.

Roger looked out from the corner of the coop. Kids milled around, went in the house, came out. More cars pulled up, kids got out. Two kegs of beer by the back door. Kids moved around, hanging out watching other kids hanging out, watching to see if there was more fun somewhere else, boys circling, girls waiting—a lot like a party he sort of remembered from twenty-five or so years ago.



Oscar lay by the back steps, his head on his paws, an empty beer cup by his chops. Some kids lit cigarettes, took long drags, big clouds of smoke. Lighting up—he remembered that. Kids passing their cigarettes around. That's generous, he thought. And there was his own little girl, Martha, reaching for a cigarette. No! no! he thought, *don't*. She put it in her mouth, his sweet little daughter. Oh, darling child, don't. A boy lit it, and out of her sweet lips came smoke. Roger had taken two steps out from behind the coop. He wanted to run to her and yet he really didn't.

Cindy was right behind him, her hand on his back. "This is ridiculous. I can't believe they'd do this. Are we going to allow this?"

"I don't know."

"You don't? No? Well. I don't know either," she said. "I was hoping you'd know. You're always so— so—"

"Strict?"

"Yes."

"You know something?" he said. "I'm getting tired of being a dad." He didn't want to march in and be the cop, everybody get quiet and him make a speech while sullen kids slink away cursing him under their breath. He wanted to take his lovely wife by her cool hand—come away, come away, my love, my sweet slim darling, mother of my children, come away. . . . She said, "Look! They're tromping on my petunias."

"Come," he said.

"You're going to just walk away and leave them?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure this is right?"

"No."

He took her hand and they stepped carefully over old lumber in their bare feet and past the wreck of the old corn planter under the box elder trees and Grandpa Steen's Model A, sunk down to the hubcaps.

"You know, that party at the gravel pit was like this," she said.

"What party?"

"Roger, honey, you know very well."

There were fast footsteps behind them, and a snarl and a bark. It was Oscar coming straight at them. "*Oscar! Good boy!*" Oscar stopped, growling. "*Oscar! Oscar!—Easy, boy, good boy.*" Roger took a step toward him, the dog barked. He backed up and barked and barked. He followed them across the field, barking.

How strange! To spy on your own house and be chased away by your own dog and then—to find that your own car is parked too far down in the ditch and when you put your foot on the gas to come away, my love, come away, my dear one, your rear end slips to the side and you're stuck. What then?

THEY MADE IT TO GRAND RAPIDS AT 4:00 A.M. AND tumbled into bed. Before he went to sleep, he saw it all over again: his long hike back to the house, up the driveway; the silence when he came around the corner, someone shut off the tape, there was a lot of shuffling and muttered hellos, and he said, "Can somebody give us a push?" And when Martha said, "What were you doing parked on the road?" and he said, "None of your business," she said, "Oh, Daddy, you didn't," and he said, "Well, I'm just human, you know," and she said, "You're so sweet. I had no idea," and smiled at him. "Huh?" he said. He said, "I meant that—you mean you thought that—you really thought that your mother and I—?" And then after the Tollerud boy pulled them out with his old pickup, when Roger had a bad feeling in his rear end: no billfold. He must've dropped it when they ran through the mud with Oscar on their tails. Maybe it was in the field, but he didn't think he'd look for it right then. He said to Cindy, "You got some money?" She said she thought that he had money. So he said to Martha, "Would you happen to have some money you could let me have until Monday?" "Hey!" she said, "my dad needs some money." They passed a hat and collected sixty dollars. "I'll pay you back!" he said to them all. "No problem, don't worry about it," they said. And the quiet ride to Grand Rapids in the middle of the night. He thought Cindy was asleep and then she said, "Sure you remember that party, that's where we met. You were with your cousin and he spilled beer on my pedal pushers and you wiped it with your hanky. I had beer running down my leg and you tried to clean it up."

Later she said, "What do you think your grandpa would have thought if he'd come home and found a hundred kids hanging around his house?"

He said, "He woulda been darned surprised to be alive in 1987, I'll say that."

Her sister had left a note on the door: "We went to bed. The rollaway is made in the basement, help yourself to anything in the fridge. Will wake you at 7. XXX Gloria."

Settling down on the rollaway, he thought again: I'm getting tired of being a dad. Love my girls, but I've been a parent long enough, I did what I could. I can't go on being in charge much longer. These kids, this world, are going to continue long after I'm gone, and I should get used to that and even enjoy it. I can't run them. I can only love them and this good life.

Thank you, God, for this good life, and forgive us if we do not love it enough. Thank you for the rain. And for the chance to wake up in three hours and go fishing: I thank you for that now, because I won't feel so thankful then.

Good night, my sweet wife, sweet dreams. He kissed the back of her neck and lay, full of love, and fell asleep. □

When You Go From Cutting Figure Eight



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*The question that
many people don't want to touch—
and that many others can't leave alone*

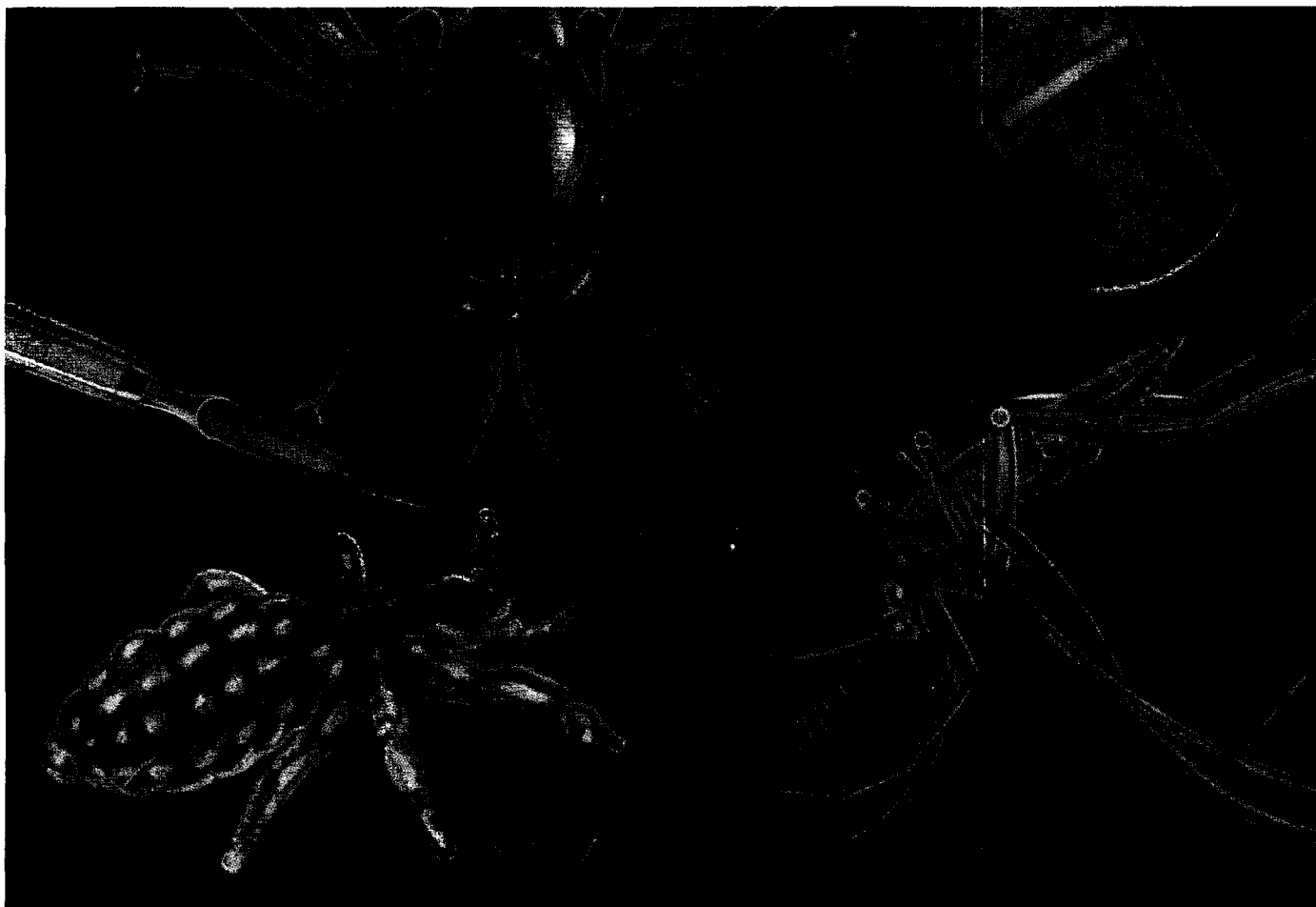
AIDS AND INSECTS

BY KATIE LEISHMAN

Epidemiological Puzzles

IN AUGUST OF 1983 DEBORAH ALTSCHULER, A HOUSEWIFE in Newton, Massachusetts, read a story in *The Boston Globe* about a new disease, apparently blood-borne and possibly sexually transmitted, affecting gay men. She clipped out the story, because she had an idea. Altschuler is the executive director of the National Pediculosis Association, an information service for parents concerned about the problem of head lice among schoolchildren, now believed to affect some five percent of students in any elementary school in the country. Pediculosis has been referred to as an infestation in search of a disease. Although the head louse hasn't been implicated in the transmission

of any blood-borne disease, it is a parasite that requires a blood meal several times a day and travels frequently from one host to another. Having read anything and everything about lice, Altschuler knew that the sexual transmission of pubic lice was common in Boston and epidemic among gay men. Curious, she called the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, and asked if anyone had considered the possibility that pubic lice had a role in the spread of AIDS. Researchers had, she was told, and pubic lice had been ruled out as an epidemiological factor. Before hanging up she asked if the official was aware of the problem of head lice among youngsters and if he thought there was any con-



ceivable cause for concern. She says, "I was told, 'Children will never be involved in this disease. It occurs strictly among gay men and Haitians.'"

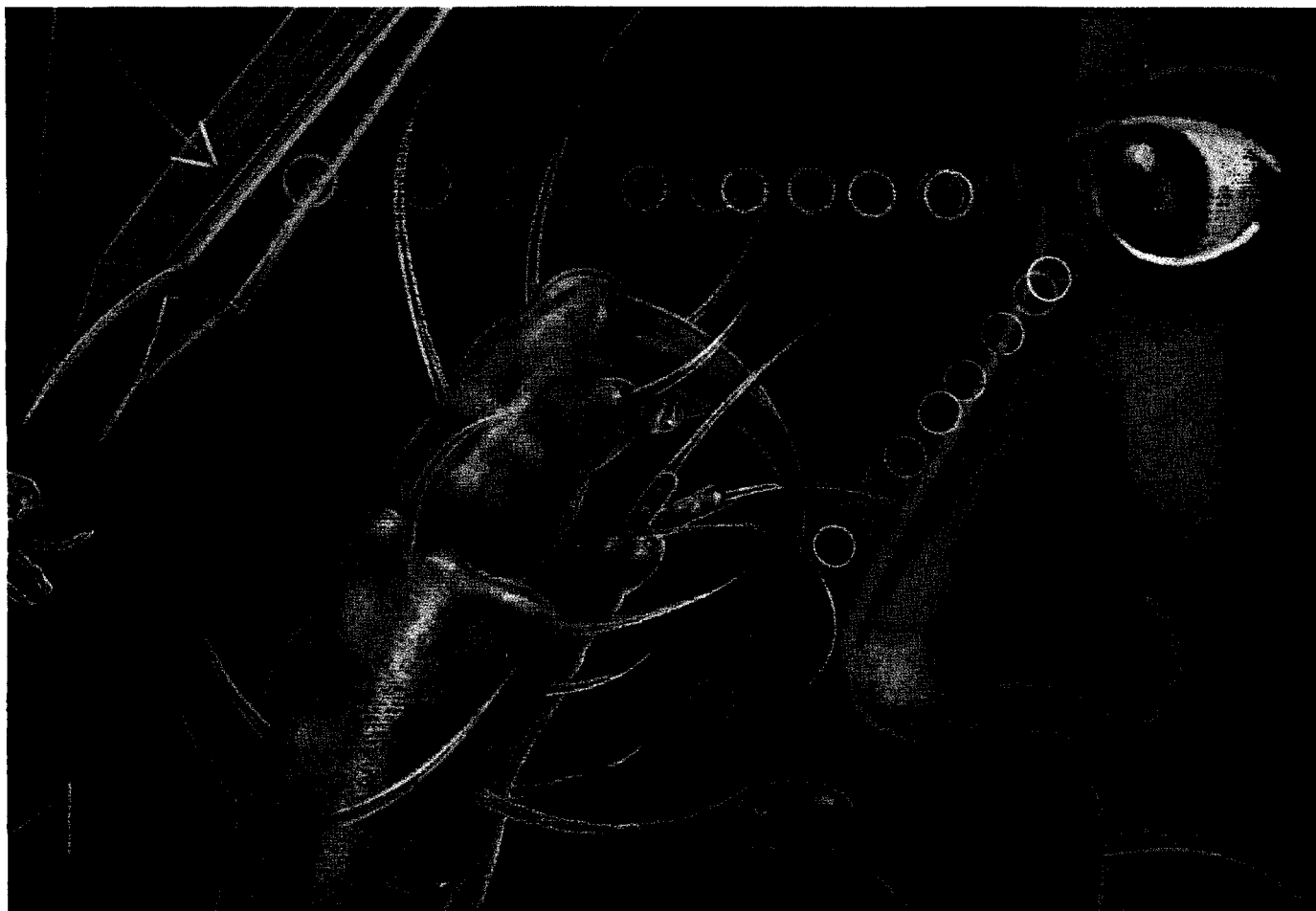
Within a year of the phone call the first pediatric cases of AIDS were officially reported, and the issue of admitting children with AIDS to school was the first problem to drive home the unprecedented complexities with which the disease was going to present the nation. Altschuler telephoned Dr. George Grady, who was then the Massachusetts state epidemiologist, and without mentioning the cause for her concern pressed him, as she had before, about the need for periodic screening for head lice in the schools. "He said that he couldn't worry about kids with lice right then—he had kids with AIDS in the schools. I said, 'But, George, what if the kids with AIDS get lice?'"

Finally Altschuler telephoned Andrew Spielman, a medical entomologist at Harvard University's School of Public Health. He told her that his "instinct" was that a child with lice didn't pose a problem to other children but that the question should be looked into. "Speaking as a parent, if I had a child in a class with another child who had AIDS, and lice were a problem in the school, I wouldn't feel very comfortable about it," he told her.

In the summer of 1985 Altschuler learned that the Centers for Disease Control was drawing up a list of recommendations related to schoolchildren with AIDS. She and

her partner, Leslie Kenney, wrote to suggest that, simply as a prudent, precautionary measure, the CDC recommend periodic lice screening for children with AIDS, children at risk for AIDS, their families, and prospective classmates. Receiving no reply, she telephoned the CDC and was told by an angry staff member that the suggestion was "impracticable" and "too frightening to include."

"Authorities tell you to be concerned about AIDS, and then if you act concerned, they tell you you are being alarmist or neurotic," Altschuler says. "Every six months they give us the news about AIDS as though it were written in stone, and then three months later they come back with a jackhammer." In one month she heard the Surgeon General and Ann Landers reassure audiences that insects did not transmit AIDS. She didn't believe that the Surgeon General's information was any better than Landers's. "Bag the opinions—just give us a study," she would say. The sentiments were not only hers, or those of the parents who asked Ann Landers, or of the physicians who occasionally wrote to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, or *The Lancet*, but belonged as well to some of the world's foremost entomologists and arbovirologists, specialists in diseases transmitted by insects and other members of the group of invertebrates to which they belong, the arthropods.





Vectors of Disease

ARTHROPODS ARE CREATURES WITH SEGMENTED BODIES and jointed legs. All insects are arthropods but not all arthropods are insects. Arthropods can transmit disease in a number of ways. Many arthropods feed on the blood of vertebrates. When an infectious agent is found in the blood of an infected vertebrate host, it can be transmitted from the host to the arthropod as the arthropod takes its blood meal. In certain instances the insect imbibes the agent, which passes through the gut, multiplies—becoming biologically integrated into the insect—and gets into the salivary glands. The arthropod is then said to be capable of biological transmission: it can transmit the agent for life. If an insect is a true biological carrier, or vector, only a small amount of virus—as little as 1,000 virus particles per milliliter of blood—need be imbibed for the virus to become biologically integrated. Certain arthropods can be infected by some agents and yet not biologically transmit the agent themselves. A number of arthropods can also transmit an agent trans-ovarially to their young.

In other instances, documented only rarely in nature, an arthropod can transmit infection mechanically, owing simply to contamination of its mouthparts from a recent infectious blood meal. This is the way that flies transmit equine infectious anemia, which is caused by an animal retrovirus whose genetic makeup is very similar to that of HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, which is believed by most to be the agent that causes AIDS. Such transmission may depend on the arthropod's being interrupted while feeding on one host and completing its meal on another (an event whose likelihood increases if the insect's bite is painful), on the frequency with which the arthropod takes a meal, on the size of its mouthparts, on the level of virus circulating in the host's blood, on the physical distance between successive hosts, and even on the longevity or relative abundance or distinctive feeding habits of the arthropod: it has been observed in connection with equine infectious anemia, for instance, that flies feed preferentially on adult rather than juvenile animals. The probability of mechanical transmission may be increased if the arthropod injects some salivary fluid or regurgitates part of its last blood meal into the next host (as the flea does in transmitting plague), or if fecal matter is infectious and the arthropod defecates on the host (that is how lice transmit typhus). Mechanical transmission, then, involves the insect only accidentally and under unusual conditions.

What arbovirologists really worry about are arboviruses, disease-causing viruses of which arthropods are biological vectors. (*Arbovirus* is a contraction of “arthropod-borne-virus.”) For the virus to be a true arbovirus, the disease must be one in which the arthropod's function as a vector is an essential, not an accidental, part of the life history of the virus. The natural transmission cycle begins with a virus, which goes into a vector, and into a vertebrate (an animal, a man, or both), from which another arthropod can then pick up the virus and carry it through its cycle again. The survival of the virus is dependent on the combination of an arthropod and a vertebrate.

Five hundred arboviruses have been identified, about a hundred of which are associated with diseases in human beings, ranging from very mild conditions to flu-like illnesses to deadly fevers. Dengue and yellow fever, both mosquito-borne diseases, remain two of the most serious pathogens in the world. The failure of international vector-control programs, which has caused an ominous resurgence of malaria worldwide, has also contributed to major epidemics of dengue and yellow fever. Such outbreaks have been exacerbated by the urbanization of tropical areas, which has also brought human beings for the first time into contact with arboviruses and other viruses never before known or associated with human disease.

The American public may not be aware of how serious a problem insect-borne diseases still are. But the emergence of a mysterious new blood-borne disease originating in Africa and the tropics, the insect belt of the world, was bound to lead people to think of bugs. The destruction of humanity by insects is a familiar theme of science fiction and a classic nightmare of many people. There is a crucial obstacle to dispelling such fears as they relate to AIDS: no one can say precisely what an infectious human dose is—it may be as little as a single active HIV particle. Because the virus is almost always contained in cells, it is difficult to measure (as opposed to the polio virus, for example, which moves freely in the bloodstream). The consensus is that the virus circulates at very low levels in blood, but no conclusive studies have been conducted on large numbers of AIDS patients, because no adequate test exists.

The tests that are in use almost always measure not the HIV virus itself but an enzyme associated with it, reverse transcriptase. In almost all of these, cells are taken from the patient and grown in cell culture. Of course, it may very well be that HIV's activity in the laboratory does not reflect its activity in the body. The search for better tests to measure HIV directly is one of the most important and underappreciated areas of AIDS research. Moreover, it is now clear that there are different strains of HIV, some more lethal than others, and that viremia—blood levels of virus—varies among patients at different phases of the disease. Such uncertainties make it impossible to write off the possibility that insects might be able to transmit AIDS, and thus have prompted the scattered preliminary studies on insect transmission. No one is going to cancel any barbecues over the results to date, and

yet it is only natural to wonder about the parts of the world where the virus is endemic, where people sleep ten to a room in unwallied homes, and where biting insects are one of life's essential problems. In a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control concerning health-care workers who had been stuck with AIDS-infected needles, only one of the 305 tested eventually seroconverted—that is, became infected. Many epidemiologists, comparing an insect bite to a needle stick, use this statistic to dismiss the possibility of insect transmission. But others argue that health-care workers represent a healthy population and that a one-time needle-stick injury can't be compared to the continual exposure to insects experienced by the malnourished, immuno-compromised people in the tropics, for whom a hundred bites a day, some on broken skin, are not unusual. Researchers now know that HIV virus in infected people multiplies in the superficial skin tissue, where insects feed.

Where AIDS transmission is concerned, insects still look like a minor worry and the possibility of insect transmission still comes under the category of "alternative theories" about AIDS, of which there are a number. Because the virus is not present in all patients, because it eludes precise laboratory quantification, and because there are cases of AIDS that no one can explain conclusively, many theories are at least thinkable. And so a conference that features speakers on insect transmission is likely also to feature speakers on aerosol transmission and transmission by household contact, and sometimes speakers arguing that some agent other than the HIV virus causes the disease. As outlandish as such symposia may sometimes become, they remind one that, five years into the epidemic, there is more we don't than we do know about AIDS.

"INSECTS WERE KNOWN TO TRANSMIT RETROVIRUSES long before AIDS came along," says Dr. Robert Shope, the director of the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit and the pre-eminent arbovirologist in the world. (Retroviruses, such as HIV, are extremely complex RNA viruses that can introduce a replica of their genetic code into the DNA of the host cell, through the action of the enzyme reverse transcriptase.) "There are retroviruses in horses transmitted by biting flies. To hypothesize that AIDS might be transmitted by flies or other insects is perfectly logical and within the realm of possibility. I don't think people should believe it until it is proven, and if it is not proven we should not believe it. But I think studies should be done. I don't think we can explain all the cases of AIDS."

The most commonly offered refutation to the possibility of insect transmission is the sharply lower incidence of AIDS among children in Africa than among African adults. But where once the official report was that there were no pediatric cases in Africa, the figures now suggest that pediatric cases in parts of central Africa are increasing, and that not all of the children have seropositive—that is, infect-

ed—mothers. The rest of the cases are usually attributed, without proof, to contaminated blood products.

Shope doesn't believe that the age distribution of cases is sufficient cause to rule out insect transmission. He says, "It is now clear that several different viruses in Africa cause AIDS. You could conceivably have a strain of virus that causes disease in a certain age group and not in others. In Thailand dengue causes disease in infants from three to twelve months of age and then there is a gap and another peak at about age eight. St. Louis encephalitis, a mosquito-borne virus, causes disease mainly in people over sixty. You can find a pattern of age distribution for many diseases. Just because AIDS does not appear in certain age groups does not mean that it cannot be mosquito- or bed-bug-borne. That simply doesn't make sense."

Certainly, puzzles about the epidemiology of AIDS remain. The World Health Organization's *Weekly Epidemiological Record* for April 24 of this year notes that in Europe, among the 271 AIDS cases of African and Caribbean origin for which the risk group has been assessed, 229, or 85 percent, cannot be classified in any of the known risk groups. The *Record* adds, "This reflects the AIDS situation in these areas: few homosexuals or intravenous drug users and a majority of heterosexual cases with no known risk factors."

In July of 1984 surveillance for AIDS was begun in the five major hospitals in Kinshasa, Zaire, the most populous urban area in central Africa. The findings were reported in June of 1986, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. After eight months 332 patients met all the clinical and lab criteria for AIDS; surveillance information was available for 295. Five percent of the patients reported an illness resembling their own among other members of their household. Ten of the patients were adolescents, and a few were younger. The study's authors, J. Mann et al., say that the low number of pediatric AIDS patients is perplexing but add that "recognition of pediatric AIDS is particularly difficult in Kinshasa since many children have severe infant and childhood diseases with similar manifestations."

The murkiness of many epidemiological studies is one reason why the question of insect transmission remains open, in the United States and elsewhere. "I get a phone call nearly every day from someone asking if they can get AIDS from a mosquito bite," says Dr. C. Gordon Smith, the dean of the London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. "I patiently explain that the possibility of contracting AIDS from a mosquito in the UK is really remote in the extreme." Some who are interested in insect transmission betray a weird enthusiasm for the idea. Smith believes that people's interest in the question lies in a desire to avoid the real issue: the need to modify intimate behavior. "It's like the good old toilet seat," he says.

The question of insects is undoubtedly a magnet for people wary of the official line—for those who question whether the disease can be contracted only through sex, in utero, or through significant contact with infected blood. Some skeptics believe that the notion of risk groups may

be sufficient for now but will not be if the numbers of infected people at large rise substantially: once a critical mass of people has been infected by the most efficient means of transmission, then transmission by less efficient means will inevitably occur more frequently.

"Mosquitoes may not be involved in AIDS transmission now in Brazil, but I am absolutely convinced that they will be within a few years," says Dr. Ricardo Veronesi, a professor of infectious disease at the University of São Paulo, the president of the Brazilian Society of Infectious Disease, and formerly the municipal health secretary of São Paulo. Brazil has almost 2,000 cases of AIDS, 70 percent of them in São Paulo. In some 10 percent of the cases, no risk factor has been identified, according to the state health secretary. A few minutes talking to Veronesi reminds one that it is a luxury to live in a temperate climate, where the only bugs that have any real day-to-day meaning are mosquitoes and cockroaches. Failing to consider insect transmission seems as ridiculous to Veronesi as entertaining that possibility does to most American scientists. "I worry about ticks, sand flies, and kissing bugs," he says. "I am one hundred percent convinced that mosquitoes or some other insects or arthropods are involved in Africa, although certainly they are not the primary route of transmission."

No one is suggesting that insects are the major issue anywhere. But can they transmit AIDS? Whatever the answer may be, to pose the question is richly instructive. Much public attention during the epidemic has been drawn to the vaccine chase and the identification of the virus. But the insect question sets AIDS in a broader context in relationship to other diseases in the world and to other areas of medical research, even as available medical funding is redirected overwhelmingly toward AIDS. To pursue the question is to be reminded, in the midst of crazily unrealistic expectations for a quick fix for this crisis, how complex any question about AIDS really is, and how slowly good science goes—the counting, the cataloguing, the measuring. And it is a question that brings into focus how young the field of virology is.



The Case of Belle Glade

ANY DISCUSSION OF INSECTS AND AIDS MUST BE ROUTED through Belle Glade, Florida. The town made history at the First International AIDS Conference, in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1985. There two physicians, Caroline MacLeod and Mark Whiteside, stood all day beside a

poster depicting Belle Glade, a low-income community in the agricultural belt of western Palm Beach County. Ten thousand Caribbean sugarcane workers come into the area each year. Among the resident population of 20,000 people there were thirty confirmed cases of AIDS, for a rate that exceeds one per thousand—a rate significantly higher than New York City's at the time. Moreover, the pattern of disease was distinct from the rest of the country's: thirteen (43 percent) of the cases had occurred in IV drug users, three (10 percent) in male homosexuals, eight (27 percent) in Haitian immigrants, and six (20 percent) in people at no identifiable risk. More than 90 percent of the victims lived in a small area of the slum section of town, the very same area where the two doctors had found sixty-eight confirmed cases of tuberculosis.

The poster photographs emphasized the slum's squalor and open sewage, and evidence of rats and active mosquito breeding. MacLeod and Whiteside held that such environmental factors contributed to the prevalence of AIDS in Belle Glade, noting that five of the six victims at no known risk had outdoor occupations. Their presentation was the hit of the conference and had everyone talking about mosquitoes and AIDS. In fact the poster never specifically mentioned the possibility of insect transmission of AIDS; someone else at the conference did. In one seminar Dr. Jonathan Mann, who had gone to Zaire as part of a research team and who now heads the AIDS program for the World Health Organization, told a hushed audience that his examination of several huts in one community led him to believe that the possibility of arthropod transmission of AIDS deserved further investigation.

From the time of the conference to the present, the CDC has not changed its position that all cases in Belle Glade can be explained without invoking insects or the environment. Yet the CDC's study on Belle Glade, released last October, does not leave the reader fully satisfied. Of the seventy-six adult AIDS patients reported in western Palm Beach County from July of 1982 to September 15, 1986, sixty-two were from Belle Glade, and seventeen of them had been born in Haiti. Without individual investigation of the Haitians' cases, the CDC reclassified them all as heterosexual-contact cases (as has been done with all "no-identified-risk" cases in persons of Haitian origin), a move that MacLeod and Whiteside bitterly protested. Thirteen (17.1 percent) of the seventy-six had no reported risk factor. The report states, however, that ten of the thirteen died before they could be interviewed and that nationally 72.9 percent of AIDS patients who were initially reported as lacking known risk factors and who were available for follow-up have been taken out of the non-risk category. Even if the CDC could reclassify 72.9 percent—or seven—of those people now dead, that would leave three more unclassifiable, in addition to the three living patients for whom they found no risk factor. In other words, using their own statistics, one would predict that seven would be classifiable and six, or almost 50 percent, would not be. MacLeod and Whiteside charge that the

CDC, rather than conducting a fact-finding study, was out to prove its assumption that bi-directional sexual transmission is the primary route of AIDS transmission, a theory that the two doctors have never bought.

The history of AIDS is brief, yet it is already easy to forget that until three years ago no virus had been isolated as the cause, no cases in Africa had been reported here, and heterosexual transmission wasn't generally thought possible. Those were the days of the 4-H Club: Haitians, hemophiliacs, homosexuals, and heroin. It was in this period—specifically, in 1982—that MacLeod and Whiteside ran the tropical-medicine clinic at the University of Miami and saw patients at the university-affiliated Jackson Memorial Hospital. They were frequently called in to see patients suffering from the new immunodeficiency syndrome, who manifested an extraordinary array of the infections ubiquitous in the tropics. Many physicians had never seen these infections, but the two young doctors, tropical specialists, were familiar with them. Both were struck by the number of patients “covered head to toe,” in Whiteside’s words, by mosquito bites.

He and MacLeod wrote a paper suggesting that the new syndrome represented a complex of tropical infections and that Africa might be a good place to look for its origins. This was the first time that possibility had been suggested. The paper was rejected everywhere. Undeterred, MacLeod started researching Caribbean-African links. She correlated the appearance of AIDS with an epidemic of dengue in Cuba in 1977, and speculated that Cuban troops returning from the Angolan conflict had brought dengue back with them. (The theory that Cuban soldiers brought AIDS to the Caribbean, ridiculed at the time, is now sometimes advanced by AIDS experts.) Since some of the immune abnormalities associated with dengue resembled those of AIDS, she hypothesized that AIDS was actually dengue in a new form.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne tropical disease with four subtypes, all of which can cause severe pains in the joints, as well as rashes and fevers. It is rare, but not so rare as it once was, for patients to develop life-threatening dengue hemorrhagic fever. MacLeod knew that most Haitians have been exposed to at least one of the four types of dengue. Reviewing the records of 400 homosexual patients with AIDS, she found that about 90 percent of them had traveled in the Caribbean, or had had sexual contacts with a partner from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, or Cuba. She hypothesized that the anal sex practiced by homosexuals permitted “the injection directly into the bloodstream of different types of dengue antibody . . . through tears in the rectal mucosa.”

Only after MacLeod and Whiteside had presented their model at a prestigious international conference did they test enough homosexuals for dengue to realize that they were wrong. The University of Miami cut off funding for the pair’s clinical work, but MacLeod and Whiteside kept looking for an arboviral connection to AIDS. They were convinced, but had no proof, that arboviral infection could

lead to immunosuppression and interact with HIV, which they believed could be transmitted by insects in areas with a concentration of infected people. They began testing all their patients for arboviruses as well as for HIV. They claimed to find extremely high rates of positivity for mosquito-borne viruses, especially for a virus called maguari. The CDC was unable to duplicate the findings. Moreover, as part of its investigation in Belle Glade the CDC tested the sera of 630 Belle Glade residents, twenty-seven of whom were HIV-positive. They looked for antibodies to a number of arboviruses and found no significant correlation between HIV status and arboviral antibodies.

MacLeod and Whiteside discounted the CDC’s findings, objecting that the CDC hadn’t used the same test they had. Whiteside still maintains, “If you have a few arboviruses plus HIV, it’s all over.” They pursued their research into the role that arboviruses and environmental conditions may play in the transmission of AIDS, and are still doing so. They continue to believe that an insect-borne disease can be sexually transmitted if there is blood-to-blood contact, and that AIDS patients even in the Arctic Circle will be found to have arbovirus in their tissue—an idea that has nearly got them hooted off the platform at various scientific conferences.

Reconstructing the early days of their research, they are pleased to share stacks of correspondence that records contradictions and modifications of several earlier theories. “Oh, well, you climb up one tree, that doesn’t work, you climb up another one,” MacLeod says. “We’re just a couple of clinicians. We’re not on some three-million-dollar grant. We don’t care if everybody agrees—we just want them to keep an open mind.” The two are appealing; they’re obviously sincere, bright people who know that everyone else thinks they’re crazy but who don’t care. MacLeod talks in seemingly unpunctuated sentences, starting in the middle of a thought. Beginning a conversation with her is a bit like turning on a radio. Whiteside, the mild-mannered son of a Kansas City minister, whose every observation is delivered with the inflection of “Nice day if it don’t rain,” is in awe of her. “She’s the kind of person who has a hundred ideas a day,” he says. “My job is to sift through them and decide which ones are worth pursuing.”

CDC officials wish that Whiteside would acquire a finer sieve. Usually circumspect scientists describe MacLeod and Whiteside as kooks or publicity hounds. When it is pointed out that they run something called the Institute of Tropical Medicine, a noted AIDS epidemiologist says, “Yes, out of their kitchen.” Nonetheless, the two have a small but loyal following across the land and around the world. They receive dozens of letters every week. The offices of several presidential candidates have been in contact with them. Letters come from entomologists and physicians interested in their research and in insect involvement in AIDS.

Belle Glade has at least eighty reported cases of AIDS now, or four cases per thousand population—the highest rate anywhere in the nation. One in four of those patients

is over fifty years of age, as compared with one in ten nationwide; the sex ratio for HIV infection in Belle Glade, according to the CDC study, is almost one-to-one, as it is in Africa.

The numbers are striking, yet it is difficult to credit MacLeod and Whiteside's theories. The two physicians have not even begun the study that would prove their theory in the simplest and most direct way possible: comparing a group of healthy HIV-positive people with arbovirus exposure and a group of healthy HIV-positive people without arbovirus exposure, to see, over time, which patients come down with AIDS.

MacLeod says that she is "tired of the whole thing" but that the questions still haunt her. She offers a meditation on AIDS. "It makes me so angry when they try to put everything in categories and make it simple. It is going to be like consumption in the 1800s, which was all different kinds of pneumonia—TB was just one of them. There were bacterial infections, viral infections, fungal infections. It is ultimately going to be all sorts of different diseases working together, different patterns, different presentations. There are going to be dozens of viral epidemics in the next fifteen years. They talk about the destruction of the rain forest and what it is going to do to the environment. Well, imagine what it is going to do in terms of diseases, all those viruses coming out with nowhere to go anymore, no animals to go into. More and more all the time. People ought to be going and finding those viruses, like they would have done twenty years ago."

Whiteside's thoughts are simpler. "Even when nobody wants to listen to you anymore, intellectual curiosity persists. I'm from Missouri and you've got to show me. There's arbovirus in these patients, and I want to know what it's doing there."



In Search of Ticks

WITH BELLE GLADE, MACLEOD AND WHITESIDE certainly started something. In the months that followed the first stories about Belle Glade, Whiteside received a number of phone calls suggesting the very different things that the question of insects and AIDS might represent to different people.

The most unusual call Whiteside received came last year from a woman named Jane Teas, in Boston, who wanted to know if there were any pigs in Belle Glade. He thought a moment. No pigs, lots of chickens. For the call-

er's purposes, this news was second best but still of interest.

In 1983, before HIV had been isolated and while all the focus was on homosexuals and Haitians, Teas, a pathobiologist and postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University's School of Public Health, had written a letter to *The Lancet*, inquiring, "Could AIDS agent be a new variant of African swine fever?"

African swine fever virus (ASFV) is transmitted from tick to pig and from infected pig to pig. The virus has never been identified as a problem in human beings. There are apparently many strains of the virus around the world, and one has appeared recently in parts of the Caribbean. Teas's letter noted, "In 1976, ASFV was confirmed in Cuba and all the pigs were killed. The island remained disease-free until 1980, when the virus reappeared, coincident with the arrival of Haitian refugees." Certain symptoms of ASFV in pigs seemed similar to those of AIDS in human beings: fever, loss of appetite, and a condition analogous to swollen lymph nodes.

Although the virus had never been associated with human disease, Teas wondered if, since new strains of the virus had been identified in the Caribbean, the Haitian isolate might relate to an accidental introduction of ASFV into the human population; perhaps a seriously immunocompromised person would be vulnerable. In her letter she suggested that perhaps an infected pig was killed and eaten, as either uncooked or undercooked meat, by a homosexual tourist. She even speculated that because the virus is stable in blood, urine, and feces, it might be transmitted through traumatic sexual practices.

After the letter ran, Teas received a communication from an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture, saying that he had heard an idea like hers in Haiti: some Haitians whose pigs were dying thought they were dying of the same cause that people were. "It seemed like there was at least a folk interpretation to these events," she says.

Most of the letters sent to *The Lancet* in response were less congenial. And one letter, signed by six Haitian doctors and a representative of the USDA, indicated that in December of 1982—before Teas had formulated her theory—they had conducted tests for ASFV antibodies in serum from eight Haitian AIDS patients and four Haitian controls and found no positives.

Perhaps the most interested, and absolutely the most enthusiastic, reader of Teas's letter was not a scientist but a newspaper man, Chuck Ortleb, the editor of America's leading gay newspaper, the *New York Native*. The more he read about the symptoms of ASFV—and he read everything—the more convinced he became that Teas was right. A friend says affectionately of Ortleb, "Chuck tends to see the world through African-swine-fever-colored glasses." Ortleb frankly confesses that he thinks destiny played some part in his fascination with the ASFV theory. "My mother was a nurse and my father was in the pork business," he says. "And suddenly I found myself in the

middle of an epidemic that might have something to do with a pig virus."

With Ortleb's encouragement and help, Teas began conducting serologic tests on AIDS patients, teaming up with a biochemist at Boston University named John Beldekas. In one study they found that ten of twenty-one AIDS patients were positive for ASFV—a finding the CDC was not able to duplicate in a similar study.

It was then that Teas decided Belle Glade might be a good place to test her hypothesis. After her call to White-side, she and her husband flew to Florida, drove to Belle Glade, and took the assistant county commissioner out to lunch. She asked him what sorts of animals were around the area and if there were any unusual problems with them. "Well, we've got a problem with hogs," he said.

Teas held her breath. It seemed that many farmworkers in the area, especially the Haitians, often trapped wild pigs and raised them for food. The pigs were not inspected, he explained, and he worried about possible health problems.

Teas drove a few miles outside Belle Glade, down a dirt road in a cane field, and found a pig farm that the commissioner had indicated. The farm was run by two black farmers, twin brothers named Ed and Ed Wilcox. They told Teas that yes, their pigs were dying in unusual numbers and they didn't know why. Knowing that many Haitian immigrants had brought along their pigs, Teas speculated that some of the Belle Glade pigs might have come from Haiti.

She made a second trip to Belle Glade with Beldekas, and tested six pigs for ASFV. Beldekas found evidence that made him suspect that three of the six pigs were positive for ASFV, and the pigs were quarantined.

The USDA repeated the test, found one positive, and asked Beldekas if he was absolutely sure he had not mixed up his samples with a reference positive sample the agency had supplied him for his research. He said he could not be absolutely sure, an admission that was reported in a *New York Times* editorial praising the persistence of the two (even if they were wrong), and one that was to cost him his job.

Matters then became even more complicated. Beldekas tested ten pigs for HIV. Some of the pigs showed positive signs for the virus, and the press announced that the pigs in Belle Glade had AIDS. However, eventually the reactivity seen by Beldekas and Teas was attributed to cross-reaction with other animal retroviruses, from which the pigs turned out to be suffering. Interest quickly subsided.

Teas was still convinced that ASFV had something to do with AIDS in Haiti, in Zaire, and especially in Uganda, where the explosion of AIDS cases between 1984 and 1986 coincided with an epidemic of ASFV. She says, "There were infected pigs rooting in people's back yards in Uganda." Two thoughts concerned her: could people get ASFV from ticks, and, if HTLV-3, as HIV was then called, was the cause of AIDS, could ticks pick it up from feeding on infected human beings?

THERE ARE HARD TICKS AND SOFT TICKS. THE ONES Jane Teas worries about are the soft ornithodoros ticks, which transmit African swine fever virus. When one takes its blood meal, which usually lasts about ten minutes, some of the fluid circulating through its body may contain residue from its last host. Some of this fluid is excreted through a gland on the tick's underside and deposited on the host, where it can seep into, or be rubbed into, the bite. ASFV will persist at infectious levels forever in ticks. It is transmitted trans-ovarially, and a single female can theoretically produce thousands of infected offspring in two years. When there are no outbreaks of disease in animals, the ticks serve as a "reservoir" for the virus. They are all but indestructible. Insecticides are useless unless they come in direct contact with the ticks.

Experimentation with tick-borne disease can be dangerous, so it is highly restricted—permitted only in institutions with what is known as a CDC Class 3 or Class 4 clearance. All of the USDA's work with African swine fever virus is conducted at its facility at Plum Island, New York. At Fort Detrick, Maryland, the Army conducts most of its high-security arboviral research in labyrinthine chambers with negative air pressure, low blocks in every doorway, and adhesive in every doorframe: in other words, the arthropod must fly upwind and make its way through several doors or climb over numerous hurdles before reaching freedom. The fact is that someone could start something in this country with one tick. "I would consider it a crime against humanity if a lethal agent were introduced into a tick and it got loose," says Jerry Butler, a professor of veterinary entomology at the University of Florida at Gainesville. Ticks are, according to Butler, "great hitchhikers that can catch a ride on anything."

In Belle Glade, Teas was less concerned that ticks were already an AIDS vector than that they might become one. "If AIDS ever got into ticks . . .," she says, and shrugs. On her first visit, she says, "I spent hours in the pig yard looking for ticks, and twice as many hours in the chicken yard." She found nothing. Last October she went back with another idea.

Larval soft ticks will attach themselves to rodents as part of their dispersal mechanism, ride around for a week, and then drop off. Teas found a rat expert, who accompanied her to Belle Glade. They discovered that the town had domestic rats that built nests in walls and roofs. They tried tearing apart walls in a few abandoned houses but found no ticks.

Unwilling to give up completely, Teas drove out of town looking for gopher-turtle burrows, because gopher turtles are also a favorite host for ticks. She found some near a tiny town named Venus, sixty miles from Belle Glade. Teas had borrowed an elaborate modified vacuum cleaner with a twenty-foot hose, which she stuck down several gopher-turtle holes looking for ticks. The holes were ecologically fascinating—some gopher-turtle burrows are over a thousand years old—and were home to all manner of strange creatures, including some ticks. Teas took samples home

to Boston, where she still keeps some of them in terraria in her living room. She plans to apply for grants to do transmission experiments with them.

Last January she made a final trip to Belle Glade, rat traps in hand, to make absolutely sure there were no tick-bearing rats in town. Her plan was to trap the rats and keep them a week, which would be long enough, she hoped, for the ticks to get big enough to be seen fluorescing under an ultraviolet light. She found no ticks and concluded that a cold spell had kept ticks off the rats.

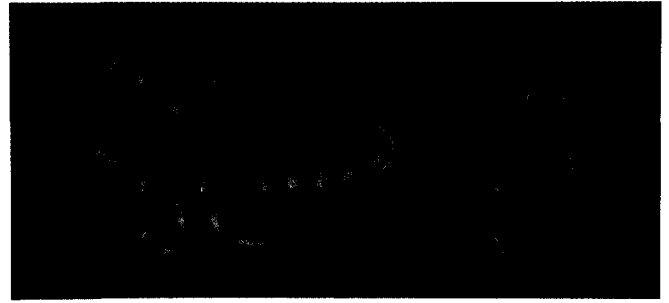
She put traps out in the evening, checked them in the morning, and did a lot of thinking about Belle Glade on her rounds. "Once when I was baiting my rat traps with peanut butter and bits of cheese, a woman saw me and said, 'You know, the kids are going to steal that food,'" she recalls. "The poverty is incredible there. I spent a lot of time talking to one woman named Lily, who had AIDS. Her best friend, who lived in the house next door, had it, and that friend's older brother and sister had just died of it. In another house, where I did some trapping, everyone in the family had died of AIDS. You figured something else had to be going on there. Why didn't even one middle-class person across the road get AIDS? It seemed to me that the concentration could only be explained by arthropods or rats."

Other times she wasn't so sure. "I became friendly with a Jamaican woman who told me that she made extra money selling cocaine, and that her daughter was her best customer. When I listened to her stories, I realized I didn't know anything about life in a southern slum."

Teas says that she has no regrets about her experience, although she admits that the publicity associated with it made it difficult for her to get a job. "Right from the beginning it was viewed not as an interesting question but as a stupid thing I shouldn't be doing," she says. "There was a tremendous prejudice against the work, with no data to support it, which seemed very unscientific to me. I nearly couldn't get a job because I had an idea. You would think the world could use a few ideas, especially with a problem like AIDS. Sure, some of them will be wrong, but isn't it better to have one than none?"

In fact the idea did not end there, partly because Chuck Ortleb kept African swine fever virus in the headlines of the *New York Native*, rejecting HIV as the cause of AIDS because the virus could not be found in many patients, and calling on Dr. Robert Gallo, the chief of research at the Laboratory of Tumor Cell Biology at the National Institutes of Health, and the nation's foremost AIDS researcher, to address the possibility of other etiologial agents.

Gallo recently told Ortleb that he had looked for similarities in gene sequences between African swine fever virus and the cancerous cells of Kaposi's sarcoma, an affliction of some AIDS patients, which Gallo thinks involved some factor besides HIV. He didn't find any relationship, but word that he had even tried to would have struck some in the scientific community like news that researchers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory were testing moon rocks to see if they were made of green cheese.



A Well-Adapted Arthropod

THE NEWS ABOUT BELLE GLADE WAS THE CATALYST for the public to start pressing the insect question on talk-show hosts, congressmen, and public-health officials. After reading the first story about the Florida town, Deborah Altschuler, of the National Pediculosis Association, called the Centers for Disease Control for the fourth time. "Can insects transmit AIDS?" she asked. The AIDS hotline operator hung up. Altschuler decided to redouble her research efforts.

Early last year she came upon a book, *Rats, Lice and History*, by Dr. Hans Zinsser, a brilliant bacteriologist and medical philosopher who had taught at Harvard Medical School until 1940. Certain of Zinsser's observations about epidemics seemed eerily relevant.

"However secure and well-regulated civilized life may become," Zinsser wrote, "bacteria, Protozoa, viruses, infected fleas, lice, ticks, mosquitoes, and bedbugs will always lurk in the shadows ready to pounce when neglect, poverty, famine, or war lets down the defenses."

These threats could interact, in Zinsser's view, and "in any great outbreak, while the large majority of cases may represent a single type of infection, there is usually a coincident increase of other forms of contagious diseases; for the circumstances which favor the spread of one infectious agent often create opportunities for the transmission of others. Very rarely is there a pure epidemic of a single malady."

One detail in the book especially concerned Altschuler. Many entomologists distinguish head lice from body lice in their ability to transmit disease, but Zinsser claimed that both the head and the body louse could do so. More than ever, Altschuler wanted a simple study conducted to ascertain that head lice could not transmit disease. She decided to find a colony of lice and a willing and able researcher and get the two together.

Deborah Altschuler was not the only party interested in lice and AIDS. Burroughs Wellcome, the company that produces the anti-viral drug AZT, also produces Nix, the newest and most promising head-lice treatment. Last year a company executive had a talk with David Taplin, a professor of dermatology at the University of Miami who is also a microbiologist and the director of the university's field epidemiology survey team. An Englishman, he spends several months a year in the tropics, conducting clinical trials for pharmaceutical companies, pursuing his

own biological research, and helping to improve the local public-health awareness and facilities. He estimates that 60 percent of the patients in the rural clinics he visits are seeking treatment for secondary infections related to insect bites, scabies, and lice. He tests de-lousing products on Indians in the San Blas Islands, which he does with his assistant, Terri Meinking, a zoologist. In the past Meinking has let lice feed on herself. Not anymore.

Taplin refuses to conduct any experiments in a clinic setting with patients. "I wouldn't want to be working with an obligate blood-sucking parasite and an AIDS patient and wake up one morning to find the louse sucking on my neck," he says. "You would want about a Class 100 security—sterile lab, complete isolation—to even consider doing such tests." But he thinks the tests should be done. He is less worried about mosquitoes, which can go weeks without a blood meal. Lice feed six or seven times a day—steadily sipping. A louse can move from one head to another within minutes, and resume feeding. "A lot of energy is going into AIDS research with flying insects, which is fine," Taplin says. "But just as much work should be going into research on an arthropod that lives on human skin—and on human skin alone—and that will move from one host to another when that first person throws a fever." Moreover, as the louse feeds, it immediately excretes the meal in blood form on the host, and Taplin thinks it is a fair question whether a virus might not persist in that blood as it dries.

Human lice—head, body, and pubic—are closely adapted to their host. For example, the strain of head lice in Africa is adapted for curly hair—the claws are shaped differently—while the strain of head lice in America is adapted for straight, European hair. When there is an epidemic of head lice in an American school, children with African hair are more resistant. Head lice are maddeningly difficult to get rid of completely once they have settled on a host.

Lice are troublesome to work with experimentally, because they nearly always must feed on human beings. If one tried to feed them live blood, whether it had AIDS virus in it or not, from a test tube, they would turn up their noses. A bedbug, by contrast, can be fed anything as long as one puts a little membrane on it and warms it up.

The finickiness of lice makes them difficult to colonize in labs. Indeed, all the laboratory lice in the United States are descendants of one colony of body lice started in the 1930s by G. H. Colpepper, an entomologist for the Florida Department of Agriculture, in Gainesville. Colpepper devised a way to keep a colony going in an incubator. The lice were fed on rabbits whose stomachs were shaved, and who were kept asleep so that they could not scratch at the lice. This so-called Orlando colony now resides at Insect Control and Research, Inc., a private entomological research company in Baltimore, Maryland, run by a former Army colonel, Eugene Gerber.

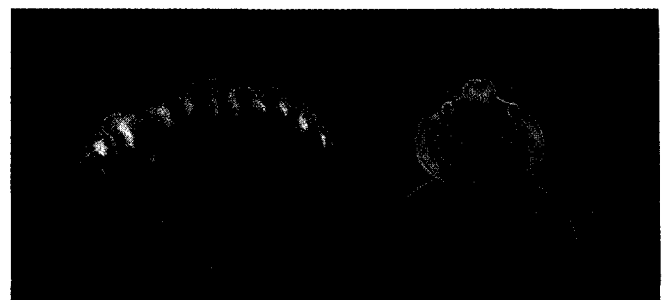
Neither Taplin nor Meinking thinks research can be done with lice from the colony in Baltimore. Laboratory insects are mutants. It has been well demonstrated in a

number of studies that over multiple generations in an artificial setting, changes take place in insects' susceptibility to a disease agent or their ability to transmit disease. Taplin believes that after numerous generations the colonized lice are actually hybrids of body and head lice, two different creatures. Meinking maintains that the Orlando lice don't look even remotely like lice in the wild. Gerber flatly disagrees with her assessment.

Most entomologists dismiss the possibility that lice could be a vector of AIDS, but Taplin and Meinking argue that many insect experts are ignorant when it comes to lice. The study of a particular insect usually intensifies only when it is associated with a problematic disease of the day. For instance, ticks are "hot" now, because of Lyme disease. "No one has really studied the biology of the louse since the 1940s, when they carried typhus and trench fever," Meinking says. As for the possibility that lice transmit AIDS, she says, "I wouldn't put it past a crab louse."

The insect that people worry most about is the mosquito, which is by far the most common vector of arboviruses. If equine infectious anemia is a valid model for AIDS, there is little to worry about. Charles Issel and Lane Foil, respectively a veterinary virologist and an entomologist at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, are specialists in the study of equine infectious anemia. They have never been able to show mechanical transmission by mosquitoes—even with as many as 200 mosquitoes biting a single infected horse. They do not believe that mosquitoes are effective transmitters of retroviruses. Instead they think that flies, which have much larger mouthparts than mosquitoes do, might be potential vectors of AIDS.

Nonetheless, recent studies concerning the worldwide distribution of HTLV-1, a human retrovirus related to HIV and associated with T-cell leukemia, has raised new concerns about mosquitoes among scientists, including Robert Gallo, the man who discovered the virus.



Bugs on Trial

LAST OCTOBER 8 ROBERT GALLO TOLD A FACULTY group at the University of Miami that he had seen convincing evidence that mosquitoes could transmit HTLV-1. The implications for AIDS seemed disturbing, because HTLV-1 is generally believed to circulate at even lower levels in the blood than HIV. He said that papers on HTLV-1 and insects would soon be published, and, in fact, a provocative study appeared this June in the

Journal of Infectious Diseases, concerning the epidemiology of HTLV-1 in rural Papua New Guinea. Serological testing was conducted on 317 healthy residents of East Sepik Province. Viral leukemia usually affects older people, yet antibodies to HTLV-1 were found in 16 percent of children younger than ten years old, including a number neither of whose parents were infected. The rate of seropositivity rose to 24 percent among subjects over the age of twenty-four, one of the highest sero-prevalence rates for HTLV-1 in the world. Thirteen percent of the subjects in one town had seroconverted within a single year.

The researchers concluded that although the mode of transmitting HTLV-1 in Papua New Guinea was unknown, two prevalent species of mosquitoes—known to be infected with a parasite that increases the insect's ability to transmit viral agents—might be involved. They proposed attempts to identify the virus in wild-caught mosquitoes that feed on human beings.

To assess the mosquito's potential to transmit HTLV-1 biologically, Gallo entered into collaboration with Dr. William Reeves, Jr., the chief of epidemiology at the Gorgas Laboratory, in Panama City, where the Panamanian and United States governments have co-sponsored biomedical research since the early 1920s. Reeves is a physician deeply versed in epidemiology, entomology, arbovirology, and tropical medicine. Long before the idea was generally credited, he began investigating the possibility that a virus causes cervical cancer, a disease whose prevalence in areas of Central and South America justifies its characterization as a tropical syndrome. The Gallo-Reeves experiment involved co-cultivation, a laboratory technique that allows researchers to establish whether insect cells brought into contact with infected human cells will become infected.

A number of insect cell lines are placed in a bottle along with certain human cell lines that are known to be high producers of the virus in question. The cells are grown together, and there is a constant production of virus in contact with the insect cells, which may potentially become infected. In the Gallo-Reeves test the cell lines were observed for ninety-eight days and infection did not occur.

"But that doesn't necessarily tell you that it can't happen," Reeves says. "Data about insect transmission is really tricky, because how do you measure it? We looked for viral replication and we didn't see it. But could that mean we looked in the wrong cell line? That we used the wrong strain of virus? We grew cells together for ninety-eight days and got nothing. But maybe someone else grows it for one hundred days, and bingo, it replicates. What if we had grown them at a temperature five degrees higher or lower? Or used a different insect? Also, the conditions for optimal insect-cell-line culture are different from the conditions for optimal human-cell-line culture. Negative results are just very difficult to interpret."

Virologists at the Centers for Disease Control performed similar co-cultivation experiments with HIV, taking cell lines from ticks, moths, and fruit flies. They found nothing. Nonetheless, many scientists—most of whom had no

knowledge of entomology, arbovirology, or natural history—would not leave the question of AIDS and insects alone. Clearly, Gallo was fascinated by it. Mark Whiteside and a colleague, an entomologist, applied to Gallo's lab for funds to investigate insect transmission of AIDS. The funds were granted, and last February, Whiteside rented a car, put 4,000 mosquitoes and forty of Jane Teas's ticks in cages on the back seat, and headed north to Rockville, Maryland, home of Bionetics, a research firm associated with Gallo's lab. Working with scientists there, Whiteside began mechanical-transmission studies.

The study on insects and AIDS which has attracted the most attention worldwide was not American but French, performed by a group working under Jean-Claude Chermann, of the Pasteur Institute. They found that genetic material of the AIDS virus could be introduced into the genetic material of insect cells in culture, and that it would persist in that form for a while, although there was no evidence of viral replication, which is essential for biological transmission. (That information alone is fascinating: if it is true that the virus integrates into insect cells but does not multiply, what inhibitors prevent its growth, and could their identification be important in developing drug therapies or even a vaccine?) The French then collected insects both in Paris and in Africa. By a process called hybridization, they were able to find gene sequences homologous to those of the HIV virus in certain insects coming from Africa, but not in any of the Parisian bugs. The African insects tested were mosquitoes, ants, tse-tse flies, bedbugs, ticks, bees, black beetles, and lion ants. Only the genetic material of tse-tse flies, ticks, black beetles, and lion ants presented sequences homologous to that of the HIV virus.

The French made no great claims for their findings, although the study concluded with what many considered to be an overstatement of their significance. They reinforced, it said, "the idea of the possibility of AIDS transmission through this route and of the constitution of a natural reservoir for this virus, although the epidemiological data do not confirm this thesis."

The press went to town with the story. *Le Point*, a respected French newsmagazine, ran a feature on the study and incorrectly stated that the hybridization signal had been positive for mosquitoes. The article was accompanied by an electron-microscope photograph of a mosquito, showing its every sinister detail. The error was perpetuated in newspapers around the world. There was no question that people interested in the insect vector were rooting for the mosquito.

Dr. Leon Rosen, the director of the arbovirus program at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, is now collaborating with the Pasteur Institute on further insect studies. Rosen was intrigued that the virus appeared in the insects from Africa but not in the ones from France. Rosen has a special interest in the natural history of retroviruses and, like many experts, believes that the question of insect transmission may at the very least yield important clues to the

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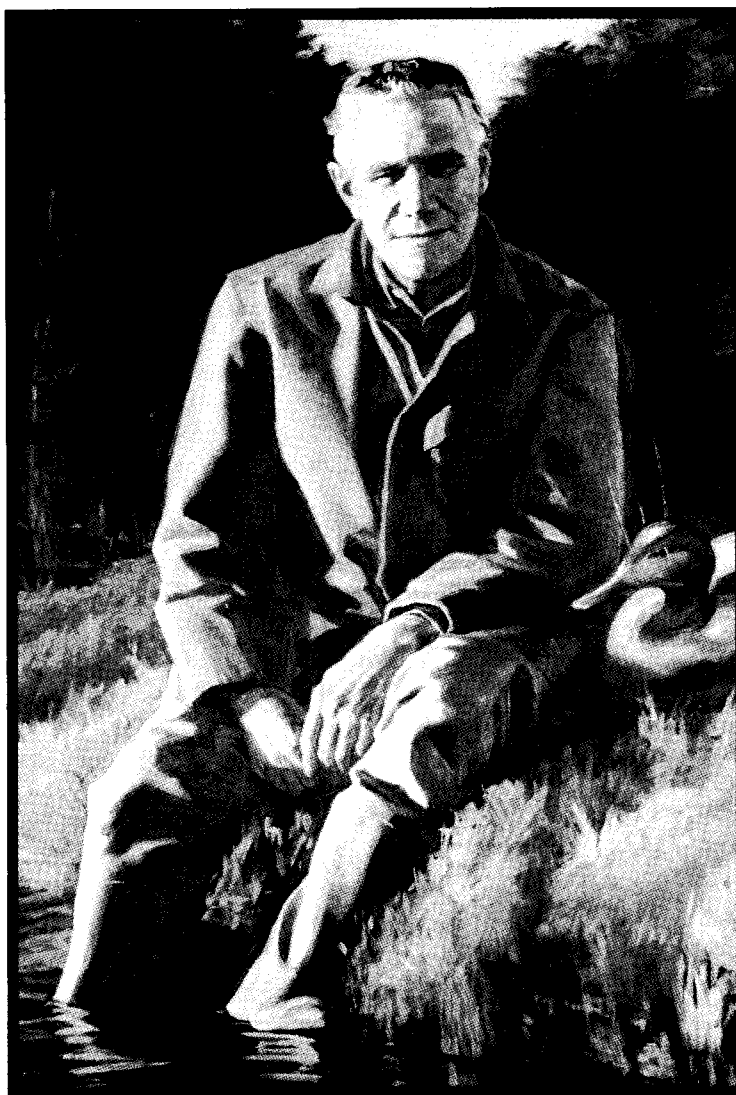
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evolution of this and all viruses. "It is possible that certain of these virus families evolved in insects, rather than animals, have gotten out of insects and into people, and can now go person to person," he says. Rosen works with the rabdovirus family, every known member of which, except the rabies virus, is associated with arthropods.

He is not claiming that insects now transmit AIDS in nature. "The chances of that are very small, but if it turned out to be true, the whole discussion would explode," he says. "The payoff for us would be fantastic in terms of support for this type of work."

When Rosen speaks of "the payoff for us" he is speaking of a hundred men around the world—a gentlemen's club, most of whose members are retired or nearing retirement—who pioneered a remarkable field of science. The field studies they conducted hold mythic appeal in the high-tech era of "bench" research. Jane Teas's sleuthing in Belle Glade, Deborah Altschuler's devotion to Hans Zinsser, and even Robert Gallo's interest in Papua New Guinea all reflect a wish to fit AIDS into the framework of an earlier scientific tradition, which took the investigation of a disease into nature, where the disease evolved.

ARBOVIROLOGY WAS BORN IN THE 1940S, THOUGH THE origins of the discipline go back further and are inextricably associated with the Rockefeller Foundation.

In 1900 Walter Reed proved that the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito was the vector for yellow fever. In the early 1930s, just as mosquito-eradication programs seemed to promise an end to urban epidemics of yellow fever in Africa and South and Central America, men began to penetrate the jungles there and came down with yellow fever—although the mosquito that carried the disease in the cities was not present. To solve this mystery, the Rockefeller Foundation, a major supporter of yellow-fever research, dispatched entomologists and mosquito specialists to Colombia, Brazil, Nigeria, and Uganda. They found variations on the known transmission cycle of yellow fever, involving monkeys and different species of mosquitoes, in the new settings. Fortunately, the discovery of the jungle cycle nearly coincided with that of the yellow-fever vaccine.

Much of the Second World War was fought in malaria zones, and everywhere the U.S. Armed Forces ventured, mosquito experts inoculated mice with ground-up mosquitoes to see if the insects were carrying malaria or dengue. They also found several diseases that they suspected were caused by previously unknown viruses. In 1951, when only a couple of dozen arboviruses were known, the Rockefeller Foundation decided to establish new laboratories around the world and send entomologists, epidemiologists, and physicians out searching for whatever they might find.

Like many of the scientists joining the effort, Wilbur Downs was a physician with a lifelong interest in natural history. "We collected viruses that looked pretty darn bad to us—they would kill monkeys, once inoculated—and we began to say, 'Where is the human disease that goes

with this thing?'" he recalls. "We matched up the viruses with symptoms tropical clinicians had not been able to explain before."

The teams bled mammals and people, and collected insects. They characterized and identified the insects, smashed them up, and inoculated animals with them. In addition, studies were conducted to determine what changes in ecology might cause a virus to leap from its natural host—a wild animal—to domestic animals or man.

By the 1960s, with every passing year fifty or sixty new viruses had been identified, and specimens were collected at a virus reference center at Yale University. New techniques were developed, such as electron micrography and filtration, that allowed scientists to perceive the viruses' sizes and shapes and unique biochemical characteristics. It became possible to create a classification system for viruses analogous to the taxonomic scheme which exists for insects and animals. But it was molecular biology, which introduced the enzymatic cleavage of viruses into parts that could be identified and recombined, that overwhelmed the field and eventually caused funding to be largely redirected toward bench work and vaccine research.

Today grant funds are almost always awarded for terms of one to three years, whereas to trace out the natural history of a single disease in its environment can take many years. Funding for the testing and cataloguing of viruses has not kept pace with their discovery. Robert Shope, of Yale, estimates that there are hundreds of arboviruses in his freezer, waiting to be identified and characterized, with nothing known about their potential association with human disease.

William Reeves, Sr., whose work on mosquito-borne encephalitis ushered in the golden age of arbovirology, says, "Many people assume we know about viruses, we don't need to collect them anymore. Well, it is just not true. The AIDS virus didn't come out of nowhere. It is new only insofar as our knowledge of it is concerned. You have to have collections of these agents going on constantly, and you have to have a continual process of looking for diseases that are associated, or you don't know what's going on."

The University of California at Berkeley, where Reeves teaches, has a bank of hundreds of serum samples from people sick with diseases of the central nervous system which have never been diagnosed. Whenever a new virus is found in the field, Reeves's research group goes through the bank to determine if any of the mysterious cases were caused by the new agent. Several recently tested samples from the late 1960s are suspected to represent cases of Lyme disease. The existence of this expensive project is continually threatened.

All such work in arbovirology, of course, rests on a comprehensive understanding of bugs. Every vector is its own story: what host it lives on, what it feeds on, what pathogen it carries, how far it can travel—some mosquitoes fly only a few yards from their birthplaces, while others fly comparatively great distances. Yet insect taxonomy is also in big trouble. Lieutenant Colonel Bruce A. Harrison is a

medical entomologist with the Walter Reed Biosystematics Unit of the United States Army. The unit conducts taxonomic studies on mosquitoes and other vectors, and is responsible for curating the Smithsonian Institution's collection of 1.3 million mosquito specimens. "As far as I know, this is the last unit of its kind in the world," Harrison says. "I feel like a dinosaur on the verge of extinction." Just down the hall from his office the tick-research unit is being shut down, even though tick-borne Lyme disease is on the rise. The tick expert just laid off is the last person in the Western Hemisphere able to identify ticks worldwide. Harrison finds that his own services are in increasing demand; he is asked to consult for health ministries all over the world. He recently returned from Brazil, where, despite the growing threats of dengue and yellow fever, he found only two mosquito taxonomists.

Scientists like Harrison, Reeves, and Downs welcome the advances that molecular biology has brought but warn that these are no substitute for field research, the careful monitoring of disease epidemiology. They have no illusions that diseases can be understood quickly or vaccines discovered overnight—or, if that were possible, that the vaccines would be effectively administered to the Third World populations who are at risk. The yellow-fever vaccine is only now being considered for universal childhood-immunization campaigns in Africa. After fifty years of investigation toward a malaria vaccine there is still no prototype that provides lifetime immunity. Meanwhile,

the mosquito vector grows ever more resistant to insecticides, and the malaria parasite ever more resistant to drugs. "You don't beat nature in one fell swoop," Harrison says. "We are getting away from slow, pounding science and going for the quick fix, and we're going to get burned."

Fifteen years ago there were some twenty-five arboviral research groups in the United States; today there are only a handful. The most active are one at the University of California at Berkeley; the Army unit at Fort Detrick, Maryland; and the Centers for Disease Control's Division of Vector-Borne Viral Diseases, at Fort Collins, Colorado. People at any of these institutions will tell you that if arthropods were ever implicated in the transmission of AIDS, entomologists, arbovirologists, and taxonomists would be back in business in a big way.

OF THESE THREE, ONLY THE GROUP AT FORT COLLINS is conducting any research on AIDS and insects, and it is not a high priority. The CDC's Division of Vector-Borne Viral Diseases, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, is housed in a building that looks like an old high school, its hallways lined with maps and photo exhibits from staff members' recent expeditions and experiments.

When there are epidemics in the United States or overseas, the division sends epidemiologists, entomologists, and vertebrate ecologists to provide assistance in describ-

SPRING AND

five days five nights of rain, rush
of rain like one's own breathing, hurry,
new river through the meadow, go
and see, makes its bed over winter's
slicked-back grasses, spring's vivid stubble,
low-slung beech limbs, evergreen fractures,
crack and fall, run-off, road broken and
steaming like bread at the tables of the
god-fearing, earth thundering, I can't

help but think of Noah driving
home the last nail into sodden wood, drunk
on his own purpose, I don't know what
sort of creature I am that I was so worthy
of salvation, it's not the skin, the brain, maybe
potential: some exquisite gene I carry
in my tissue, am I future's hope, home
of the soul, God's crowning
success? It's hard to believe. No,

if this is the second coming of the
great deluge, I'll have to swim for it, God
must have learned something by now: that we
humans insist on living by the false
idol of our own sad wits, I'll swim
and gladly, going down with the ship
of my body, taking my comfort from the pond
in the meadow, see? The harder it
rains, the quieter that pond grows, just

as if it exists in another dimension, and
that's where I'm going, concentrating
until this frenzied rain lulls me: I'm lying
in my bed, I'm that child in her bed, rain
softening roof's power to hold me in,
the animals all gather near as they should,
and we wait for God in his slick yellow
raingear to hand us down our sweet dreams,
hand us up clear of our breathing, give us a wink.

—Elizabeth Libbey

ing the epidemic and controlling it. Yet for the division's director, Dr. Thomas Monath, the first concern is threats posed domestically by vector-borne diseases. AIDS is not a major worry of his, though he did decide to take up the question last year.

He found no viral replication in mosquitoes that he and his colleagues inoculated, and so excluded mosquitoes as biological vectors. For his study of mechanical transmission he chose the bedbug. Bedbugs are relatively easy to work with, except that they don't like to eat in the daylight, so the researcher works with a red penlight. More important, some experts believe that bedbugs can mechanically transmit hepatitis-B virus, which has been used as a model for understanding HIV.

It has been difficult to explain the high rates of hepatitis-B in Africa and elsewhere in the tropics, even allowing for the acknowledged roles of sexual contact, open sores, and environmental conditions. A trace of virus is sufficient for transmission—an amount a bedbug can easily manage, according to a number of researchers. Others deny that such transmission has been proved. But Dr. Baruch Blumberg, the Nobel Prize-winning developer of the hepatitis-B vaccine, says, "You'd have to prove it *didn't* happen. There are two hundred million carriers of hepatitis-B in the world, practically none of whom have had blood transfusions and few of whom have had injections. You can become infected from just a few viruses—and there are billions of insects carrying them from one body to another."

In 1973 Blumberg's team collected bedbugs from beds in huts in Senegal and found that about 70 percent of the bedbugs were contaminated with hepatitis-B. Subsequently the researchers P. G. Jupp et al., from the National Institute for Virology, in Johannesburg, South Africa, demonstrated bedbug transmission of hepatitis-B to a laboratory rabbit.

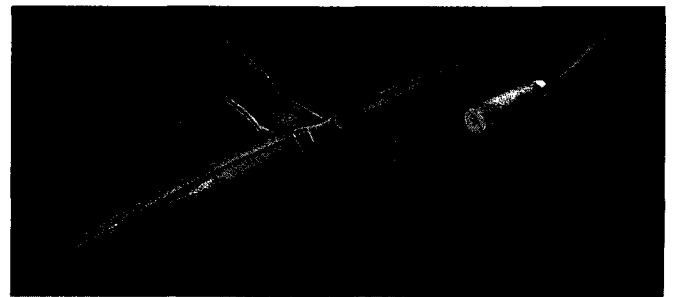
The relevance of these findings for the study of AIDS is unclear. Hepatitis-B circulates freely in human blood, but again, it is believed that HIV does not, as a rule. However, because hemophiliacs have become infected with HIV after receiving pure plasma, which contains no cells, it is clear that some virus must circulate cell-free. When creating a feeding solution for their bedbug experiments, Monath's group put in a hundred times as much virus as anyone has guessed is circulating in even the most viremic AIDS patients. They fed the bedbugs on this material and halfway through the feeding used forceps to move the bugs onto an AIDS-free feeding solution. No transmission to the liquid in the second chamber was observed.

Once fed, the bugs were crushed at varying intervals and tested for virus. (This is the way most studies of mechanical transmission are conducted. However, some experts believe that this so-called bug-crunching means nothing in terms of exploring the potential for transmission in nature.) Virus could be detected immediately after feeding but not after the bugs had been held for an hour. The concentration of virus in the chamber was increased twentyfold and then virus was detectable in crushed-up

bugs after seventy-two hours. "This means nothing biologically," Monath says. "It is just like saying virus sat in a test tube for seventy-two hours. But it is of some concern. I suppose, that we can still demonstrate the virus after three days in something that can crawl around."

Monath concedes, "No one knows precisely what an infectious dose is. It may be just one lymphocyte packed with virus. It has been shown that infected cells can stick to the mouthparts of a biting insect. You could say that one cell might have a hundred thousand virus particles in it, and if that one lymphocyte stuck on the beak of a bedbug it might be an effective means of transmission. But how many lymphocytes in an AIDS patient are infected, and how many are not, and what are the chances of one highly infected lymphocyte sticking on the beak of a bedbug?"

Monath did not attempt mechanical-transmission experiments with mosquitoes. Mark Whiteside and the NIH researchers did. Again, using a feeding solution with huge doses of HIV, they found evidence of virus in mosquitoes forty-eight hours after an infectious meal. But they could not demonstrate transmission of HIV from one feeding chamber to another, a finding that, Gallo said, undercut the hypothesis that mosquitoes were involved in AIDS transmission in nature. Jane Teas's ticks were a problem. The researchers believed that in the lab the ticks had dried out and died. But the behavior and appearance of dead ticks and living ones can be remarkably similar, and a number of the ticks proved to be vital. These were fed on HIV-infected blood, crushed up, and tested. Viral antigen was detected in some of them up to seven days after feeding, but, as the researchers acknowledge, the experimental conditions were extremely artificial. To get a better idea of what actually occurs in nature, Whiteside and his colleagues are considering attempts to demonstrate mosquito and tick transmission of HIV between monkeys.



AIDS and the Alternative Theorists

IT IS THE DEARTH OF PRECISE QUANTIFICATION STUDIES concerning the levels of HIV—even its presence—in the blood of infected people that occasions worry about insects, and if not about insects, then about something else. Questions about quantification bring out the doubters of all degrees; here respected scientists, conspiracy theorists, and alarmed parents can sometimes sound alike. "It is not enough to say that there is virus in semen or in blood," says Dr. Albert Sabin, the creator of the oral polio

vaccine. "It is important to know the quantity when you are postulating how many people are spreading the disease. What does it take to spread—just a little bit of blood on a needle or exposure again and again and again?"

AIDS patients are known to be more viremic at certain phases of the disease. Moreover, the particles of a given virus vary widely in their pathogenicity—a matter that Sabin feels is too often overlooked in the discussion of AIDS. "Among naturally occurring polio viruses there could be a difference between viruses such that a single tissue-culture-infectious dose of one polio virus could kill a monkey when inoculated into the brain, whereas a million doses of another couldn't kill when put in the brain," Sabin says. "The molecular biology is all very nice, but we need more of the classical biological studies of HIV. There were studies for thirty years of the natural history of polio before we knew what to do to eradicate it." Sabin has no patience with the argument that HIV is uniquely difficult to measure: "Easy things are for children in the street," he says.

Some scientists, without doubting that the presence of the virus is associated with the disease, have been prompted by the elusiveness of the virus to question whether it is indeed the etiological agent.

Peter Duesberg, an eminent virologist at the University of California at Berkeley who has twenty years' experience working with retroviruses, is one such skeptic. His objections are disregarded by most of his colleagues. In the March 1 issue of *Cancer Research*, Duesberg published an article arguing that no one has proved HIV to be the cause of AIDS. In the article he invokes Koch's postulates, the classic basis for establishing a micro-organism as the cause of any disease. Two of these require that the micro-organism be found in all cases of the disease and that the disease be reproduced when a primate is inoculated with the agent. Neither is the case with HIV and AIDS. "Once they said that HIV alone causes AIDS," Duesberg says. "Now they say it is HIV plus co-factors. Well, if you say that AIDS is caused by HIV plus something else, until you know what the something else really is, you are only speculating about both of them as the cause."

"We are told that there is no more HIV activity in people dying of AIDS than in healthy carriers with no symptoms," Duesberg says. "That claim is unprecedented in the study of viral diseases. HIV infects one in ten thousand susceptible cells. We wouldn't be here after three or four billion years if we could die from such a virus. Biologically we are not that fragile. Something has to be done to kill a person; it is not that easy, after all. If you don't use a gun, you have got to do, biochemically, *something*." Ordinarily, a person is at risk until he forms antibodies to a virus—that is, mounts immunity against it. Yet with AIDS—if one accepts HIV as the cause—disease progresses, paradoxically, once one has formed antibodies. The fact that disease proceeds in the face of persistent immunity, Duesberg believes, strongly suggests that the virus is not the culprit, although he says that blood that is HIV-positive may also contain whatever agent it is that actually causes the disease. He is so cer-

tain of his claim that he has offered to be inoculated with HIV.

Shyh-Ching Lo, at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, reports discovering another virus in twenty-three out of twenty-four AIDS patients he has studied. (Generally, the HIV virus has been detected in no more than half of AIDS cases.) No one has been able to duplicate his work, and many researchers question whether what he has found is even a virus. Lo's group has stopped talking to the press. The last journalist in contact with the group was Chuck Ortleb, who says that Lo's assistant told him that the new virus killed monkeys inoculated with it.

Ortleb believes that whatever is causing AIDS is related to the concurrent epidemic of chronic-fatigue syndrome, commonly called Epstein-Barr syndrome, although the Epstein-Barr virus has never clearly been implicated in all cases of the syndrome and some scientists believe that another virus, called HBLV, may be to blame. Victims of chronic-fatigue syndrome are often permanently disabled with incapacitating exhaustion, dizziness, swollen lymph glands, and a sore throat. Brain scans of the many so-called E-B patients show the same abnormalities seen in scans of AIDS patients, and lymphoma and other cancers commonly result from infection. The syndrome seems to be transmitted like the common cold—by coughing, sneezing, household contact—and patients have transmitted the disease to family members, sometimes within a few days of becoming ill themselves. More than a hundred physicians and 3,000 nurses have come down with the illness; almost all of them have treated AIDS patients. Many of them are concerned that AIDS patients are spreading the mysterious agent. The chronic-fatigue-syndrome sufferers are not positive for HIV. Lo is reportedly testing the serum from a number of fatigue-syndrome patients to see if it contains the agent that he has discovered.

Some of the more unorthodox ideas about AIDS have come from physicians. Stephen Caiazza is a doctor in New York City who believes that AIDS is just the latest manifestation of syphilis, medicine's great masquerader. (The syphilis rate in this country jumped by 23 percent in the first quarter of 1987, which was the largest increase in ten years.) Dr. John Seale is an English venereologist who, having learned that the virus had been isolated from respiratory secretions of AIDS patients, became convinced that aerosol transmission, especially if the virus mutates, is a possibility—particularly in association with tuberculosis. "No one knows where virus is being shed from, how much, and for how long," he says testily. "All the claims about the infectiousness of semen are actually based on two brief papers [these appeared in the October 26, 1984, issue of *Science*], concerning only three patients."

Seale believes that epidemiological studies start out with a bias in favor of sexual transmission and contaminated needles. "Two years ago they were telling everyone that no children in Africa had AIDS. Now they're saying, 'Well, they do, but it's all dirty needles.' It is a well-known fact that Eskimo children and children in Central Africa

were giving each other hepatitis-B long before there were needles there."

Seale claims that HIV is harder than is generally believed and that it is irresponsible not to project grave scenarios. "This is a new virus spreading for the first time in mankind in epidemic form," he says. "Those strains which are most easily transmissible will appear first. If it is present in blood, saliva, and semen, it is reasonable to hypothesize a dynamic situation which works in favor of the virus. It might find new receptor sites, including salivary glands. Nobody's even looking . . ." Interviewed on the phone from his home in Devonshire, his frustration mounting with each observation, he nearly hung up in agitation at several points and finally concluded, "If a science-fiction writer had invented AIDS and the scientists in the book were behaving as these scientists are, the writer wouldn't find a publisher, because no one would find the behavior credible. Nobody in science fiction would get away with this crap."

Seale, like Duesberg, Whiteside, and MacLeod, is respected in his own practice yet dismissed by most AIDS researchers and clinicians as a crank. Lengthy discussions with any of these iconoclasts may convince one of nothing yet engender a yearning for a little less certainty on the part of officials, who, whether these people are right or wrong, have already been wrong themselves several times.

This summer, responding to continuing public concern about insects and AIDS, the Office of Technology Assessment sponsored a one-day workshop on the topic in Washington, D.C., for scientists from around the world. The latest studies were reviewed. Chermann's group, from the Pasteur Institute, updated their first report. They had collected 200 insects in regions of Africa where the virus is now endemic. In contrast to their first study, which exonerated mosquitoes, this time they found HIV genetic material in 30 percent of the mosquitoes. Interestingly, they found it in both male and female mosquitoes, although only female mosquitoes take blood meals, which Chermann thought suggested trans-ovarial transmission. Chermann said that although insects might be able to pick up infected material from people, the epidemiology of AIDS did not indicate that bugs were actually transmitting the virus.

Also present at the meeting was P. G. Jupp, the South African researcher who has clearly implicated bedbugs in the mechanical transmission of hepatitis-B. His research suggests that the bedbug but not the mosquito may mechanically transmit HIV—findings he presented at a seminar at Harvard University's School of Public Health.

Sitting in the back row, their tape recorders whirring, were Deborah Altschuler and Leslie Kenney. The National Pediculosis Association had found its man. After reading an article of Jupp's, Altschuler had written him and he had

agreed to begin lice experiments. He could even provide his own bugs, caught in South Africa—the best solution yet. Other speeches followed, including one about viruses related to AIDS. Altschuler turned to an entomologist sitting beside her and asked, "Does this mean that if it turns out another virus causes AIDS, they would have to repeat all the insect experiments they have done already?"

"Absolutely," he replied.

Thus far, laboratory experiments point away from insect transmission, but no one suggests that the laboratory holds up a perfect mirror to nature. Factors in the wild may play a part no one has thought to consider. Andrew Spielman, of Harvard University, has discovered that the malaria parasite sometimes damages the mosquito's salivary glands to such an extent that the mosquito has to probe more often than usual to get its meal, perhaps increasing its ability to transmit a viral agent on its mouthparts.

The "vector competence" of other insects, too, can be affected in strange ways. For instance, it may not be possible to prove in a laboratory setting that the kissing bug is a vector. Yet it is known that in nature, if the food supply is low, the bugs in a kissing-bug colony may puncture the gut of a bug that has just eaten, and feed from it. If the meal was infected, the punctures in the digestive tract might allow the agent to reach the salivary glands of the original bug, who usually survives. "Even when you get negative transmission data in a lab, it doesn't necessarily mean insects can't ever transmit that agent in nature," says Robert Shope, the Yale arbovirologist. "There is so much we don't know about their lives."

There may never be any more consensus about AIDS and insects than there is about hepatitis-B. Both diseases can be contracted in more than one way, so there can never be the epidemiological clarity there is with, say, malaria. Yet to dismiss any conceivable route of transmission, however improbable, however small a role it may play, seems misguided. Any official tendency to do so only evokes public distrust.

Two years ago an official from the Centers for Disease Control assured an audience in Belle Glade that poverty, the environment, and insects had nothing to do with AIDS. Last May in *Science* magazine's job-advertising pages there appeared a listing for a research entomologist to explore the "possible role of biting arthropods in transmitting human immuno-deficiency (AIDS) virus. . . . Send applications to: . . . Centers for Disease Control."

People have lost jobs and reputations devising new theories about AIDS. The disease remains one of the greatest medical mysteries of the century. Important headway was made in the first five years of research. Now we are in for the long, long haul. Who's to say that a question that often goes disregarded isn't one that holds an answer everyone is looking for? □



FIRST ENCOUNTERS

JEAN RENOIR AND ERICH VON STROHEIM

BY THE MID-1930S the Austrian émigré actor-director Erich von Stroheim was anathema to the entire Hollywood establishment. They inveighed against his wildly extravagant and dictatorial practices and his increasing bent for decadent sensuality. So he cut out for Paris. The admiring French showered him with acting opportunities. The director Jean Renoir, who as a young man had sat through von Stroheim's *Foolish Wives* thirty-four times and had lauded the stark realism of *Greed*, sent him a new script about French soldiers in a German POW camp during the First World War—*La Grande Illusion*.

A meeting was arranged. As von Stroheim waited stiffly in a makeshift office, a cherubic man wearing a baggy suit appeared at the door. Renoir was unaware of his prospective actor's abhorrence of bodily contact with members of his own sex (on occasion von Stroheim employed a click of the heels to avoid shaking hands), and in the best Gallic style kissed him firmly on both cheeks. Von Stroheim tensed, but the gesture was so heartfelt that he not only succumbed, he returned it in kind.

He was less yielding where his film image was concerned. Hardly had conversation begun when von Stroheim was making suggestions about the script—such as combining the two German officer roles into one, for himself. Later he pressed for a more flamboyant uniform. Only when shooting began and he wanted to incorporate prostitutes into the opening scene did Renoir balk. Von Stroheim's combat experience had, after all, been limited to playing granite-faced Huns on the silver screen. It was Renoir who had fought in the trenches and frequented the front-line officers' mess—*sans* prostitutes. How could his idol of cinematic realism opt for clichés of that sort?

Once again von Stroheim had embroiled himself in a test of wills, but this time his adversary, instead of pulling rank or dismissing him, burst into tears. Rather than quarrel he would give up the film, Renoir said. No, no, said a repentant von Stroheim, from now on he would follow instructions with slavish docility. Wet-eyed, they fell into each other's arms, protesting eternal *entente* and *Freundschaft* forever.

—Nancy Caldwell Sorel

THE MEGAETHON: 1850, 1906–1929

BY LES A. MURRAY



Farmer Cleve, gent., of the Hunter Valley has ordained that his large Sydney-built steam engine shall be walked home under its own power, on iron shoes serially laid beneath its wheels. Making four miles a day, it's no fizzer. He has christened it the Megaethon, Greek for the Ruddy Big Fiery Thing.

On black iron plates that lean down and flatten successively, imprinting rectangular billets of progression, it advances on the Hawkesbury district hissing, clanking, stoked by freed men. People run from oatfield and washhouse, from pothouse and cockpit to gape at its shackled gait, its belt-driven pulsation:

"Look, Mother, it walks on its knees!" "Aye, it's praying its way to Wiseman's Ferry, coughing black smoke out of its steeple!" Sparks canter by it, cracking whips. Small native children scream "Buggy-buggy!" and the iron gangs straighten from their sad triangular thoughts to watch another mighty value approach along their spadework.

In that last, dissolving convict year what passes their wedged grins is a harbinger not merely of words like *humdinger* but of stumpjump ploughs, metal ores made float, ice plants, keel wings, a widening vote, the world's harvesters, the utility truck, rotary engines pipemoulds lawnmowers—this motor the slaves watch strikes a ringing New World note.

As, tilting, stayed with ropes and pulleys, the Megaethon descends a plateau edge, casting shoes, crushing sandstone, only the poorest, though, watching from dry bush in that chain-tugging year, last before the gold rush know that here is a center of the world and that one who can rattle the inverted cosmos is stamping to her stamping ground.

Not guided by such truth, the Megaethon veers towards rum-and-opium stops, waits, cooling, beside a slab bordello and leans at last in upland swamp, flat-footed, becoming salvage, freight for ribald bullockies. Its polygonal rhythms will engender no balladry; it won't break the trench lines at Vicksburg.

The engine goes home to make chaff and the idea of the Megaethon must travel underground. Stockmen gallop above it. It travels underground. Secret ballots and box kites are invented, unions form, national purposes gather above it. It travels underground; for fifty years it travels underground

losing its first name. It surfaces in Melbourne at last, in the mind of one Frank Bettrill, who calls his wheel of three sliding plates the Pedrail or Dreadnaught wheel "for travelling across country in all conditions, where roads may be absent." In all but name, the Megaethon

is abroad again, now clearing country,
now ploughing the new farms. Its jointed
wheel-plates go to war on artillery
lashing back the Ottoman Empire
from Suez to Damascus. The monster
guns of Flanders advance and recoil
on many-slatted wheels. Tanks grind by them,
collateral descendants of the Megaethon

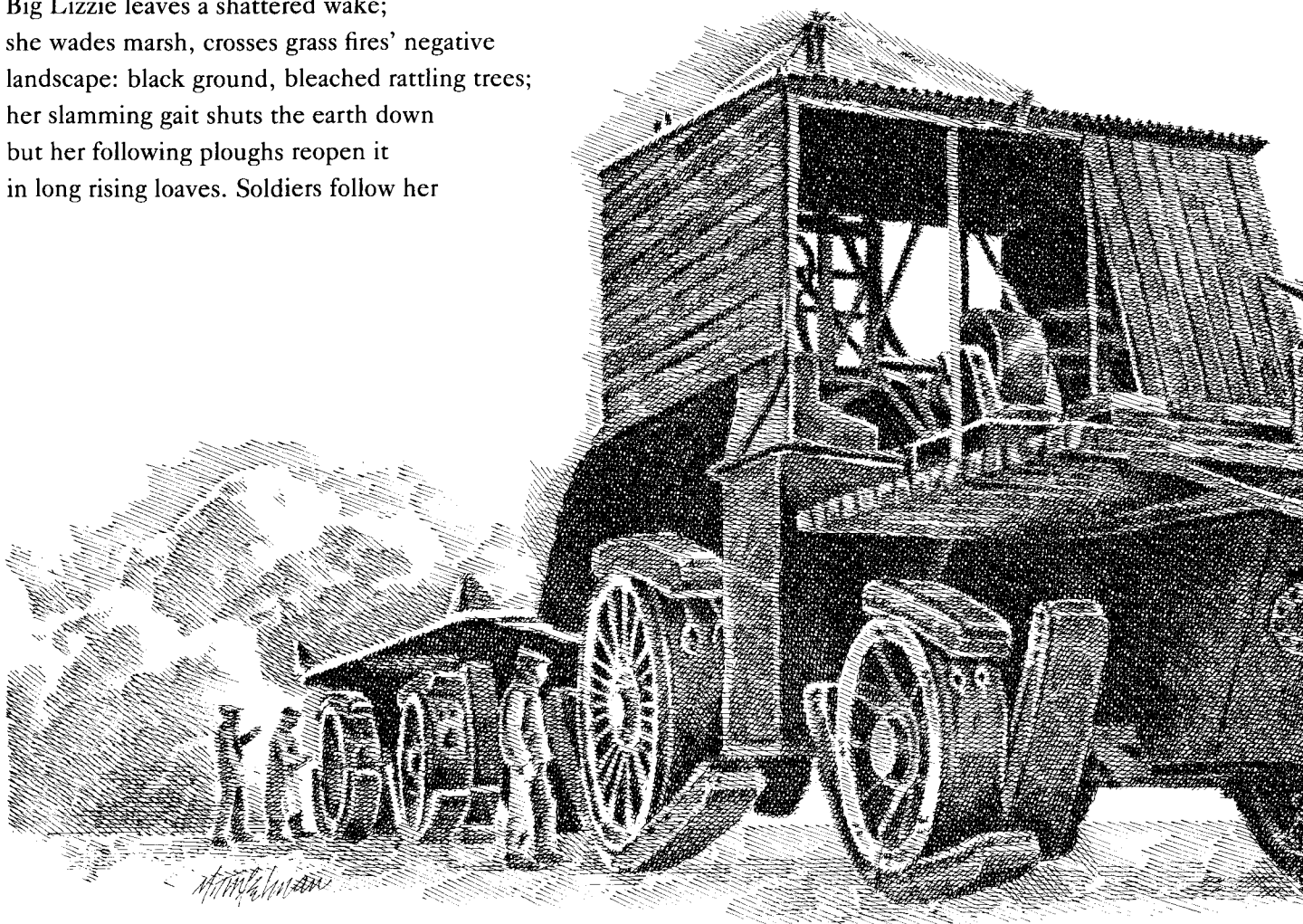
which itself remains in innocent
rebirth in its own hemisphere.
Its largest example, Big Lizzie
spends the mid-war years crossing Victoria
and following the Murray through Gunbower,
Mystic Park and Day Trap to Mildura.
From its cab eighteen feet above ground
crews wave to the river paddlesteamers:

"Gutter sailors! Our ship don't *need* water!"
Submarine in the mallee forests
Big Lizzie leaves a shattered wake;
she wades marsh, crosses grass fires' negative
landscape: black ground, bleached rattling trees;
her slamming gait shuts the earth down
but her following ploughs reopen it
in long rising loaves. Soldiers follow her

and turn into farmers sewing full
wheat bags with a large darning needle.
Giant workhorse born between the ages
of plodding feet and highway speeds,
it takes lorries a decade to catch
and relegate Lizzie's oil-engined shuffle.
The Megaethon thus re-enters quaintness
at two miles an hour, having,

though ponderous, only lightly existed
(twice so far) and never directly
shed blood. And there, repaired with wire
from strict fences, it still walks the trackless,
slow as workaday, available for metaphor,
laying down and picking up the squeezed-
fragrant iron suit-cards of its patience,
crews making mugs of tea from its boiler.

—Bunyah, 1985



A Short Story



TALKING TO THE SUN

BY GAIL REGIER

SATURDAY I GO SEE RIO. THE HOUSE IS FULL OF FLIES again. One of the kids that hangs out there is playing Spider-Man in the living room, running two steps up the wall and then slipping back down. Rio sits in the bathtub in an inch of water, using a safety pin to embroider her left palm with tiny dots of blood.

"Please don't do that," I say to her, sitting down on the toilet lid. The kid turns his head at the sound of my voice and then goes back to running at the wall. "Why don't you give me the pin, Rio?" She looks me over, squinting at the sunlight coming through the curtainless window, then returns her attention to her hand. "It's Cody, Rio. We're going to the museum." I hold out my hand for the pin, careful not to get too close. She closes the pin and puts it in my hand.

"I know who you are," Rio says. "You always pretend you're not looking at me when I'm naked. Let's go see the stuffed birds."

She starts putting on her clothes. "How about drying off, Rio?" I say, finding her a towel. She scrubs at her hair and shoulders, then drops the towel and pulls on her jeans. She comes up close and holds still while I comb the tangles out of her dark hair. She's as tall as I am. I make some coffee. Somehow I've gotten used to the mess, although at home dirty dishes in the sink or somebody's shoes left out drive me crazy.

"The welfare was here," Rio says. "They're gonna take Tommy away."

"The kid in the living room?"

She nods. "I told them his mother hired me to take care of him. They said they were going to get a warrant."

I get a first-aid kit from my car and have her hold her hand over the sink while I pour peroxide all over her palm and wrap it in gauze. Rio watches me the way she watches everything, the way she looks at her coffee cup before she picks it up.

RIO LIKES WALKING ACROSS THE LAWNS ON THE COLLEGE grounds. She likes the museum's silent, cool, high-ceilinged rooms. She flits past the display cases like a novice shoplifter, peeking into them slyly. Tapestries and arrowheads, antique planes and augers, bone fishhooks, old dolls. She asks the guard how much the earrings are. He's used to her and smiles. He thinks I'm her husband. Rio takes my arm and tells him I've just come

back from a business trip and she can't wait to get me home. He smiles and walks on. She makes a fist and shakes it at his back.

"We would have killed him in the camps," she whispers.

When we get to the fossils, she breathes out sharply. With a finger she traces on the glass tops of the display cases the ridges and fantails of the shapes within. In the next room mouse, fox, and leopard skeletons, jointed with steel screws, crouch and scurry and snarl all around her, but she is more relaxed than I ever see her anywhere else. She knows each beast by its Latin name, knows by heart the data on each wall plaque.

"Look at the curve of that back," Rio says. "The whole body's one fierce smile."

The bird room is at the end of the building, where Rio can smoke without the guard's seeing her. The birds are wired up in positions of flight. Owls and hawks swoop down, wings and talons spread.

"How do they stand it?" Rio says. "All that air under them."

We sit side by side on the cool tile floor, leaning back against bumpy plaster. Rio smokes, watching the giant clamshell as if she expects it to close at any moment.

"Sarah didn't want me to come and see you," I say.

"Your wife's so dumb," she says.

"Sarah's not dumb," I say. "She's just not quick like you. Rio, you've got to promise me you won't call the house anymore. Sarah can't stand it. She told me you came by her shop last week and hung around. You can't do that." I try to sound stern. Sometimes that works. But it sounds like I'm pleading. "She only bought the place last year. She can't have people making her customers nervous."

Rio smiles vaguely and smudges the hot end of her cigarette against her other thumb. I singe my fingers taking it away from her.

"Don't be so nervous, Cody. Settle down."

"That's how it is, Rio. You've got to promise. Or I can't have anything to do with you. I mean it."

"Okay, Cody. No calls. No visits. I'll crawl back into my shell."

We're quiet for a while. I let her smoke some more. "Talk to me, Cody," she says. "Nobody ever talks to me. Tell me about you and Sarah."

Hearing about my family cheers her up. Deep down she wants a normal life. A while back she asked me if we

make love a lot, stuff like that. I shouldn't talk about it, but hell, it's just Rio. Getting another woman's point of view is interesting, particularly if she doesn't think you're coming on to her. Although I guess in a way I am. Sarah's my wife, but if Rio weren't hung up about sex, we would have been in bed long before now.

"So tell me some more," Rio says. "One of these days I'm going to take the plunge, and I want to be ready. What do you talk about?"

I tell her how we talk about Sarah's old lovers when we're in bed. About her doing things with them. Some of it she makes up, but I'm not sure what. I've never told anybody else about it. So why am I telling Rio?

Rio is fooling with the laces of her tennis shoes again. I can't keep them tied. She's not looking at me, but she's listening. Disturbed people circle their obsessions; something inside her is always trying to fight through.

"Why does she do that? Does she like it, or do you?"

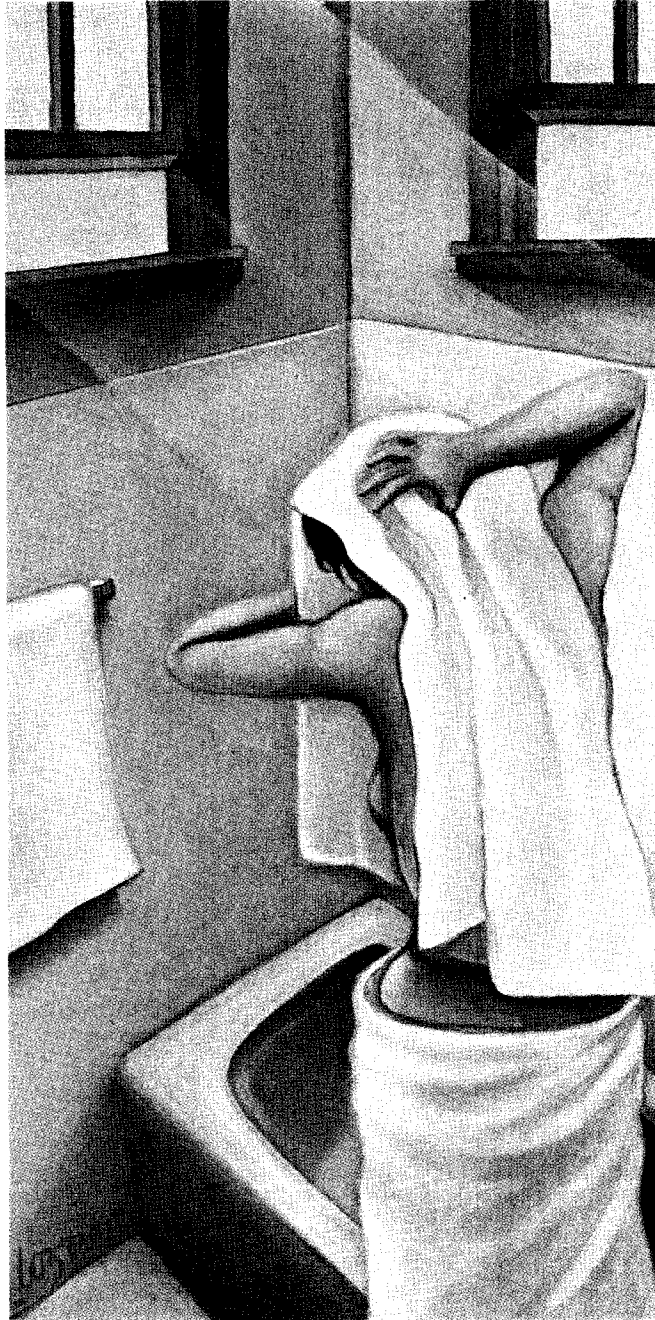
"Sometimes I think Sarah hates it." When you've been married for years, you have a hard time remembering how some things got started. Rio wants to know all the details, so I tell her a few of them. They're not so unusual. You see them all the time in those magazines for couples. Sarah and I used to read magazines like that in bed, but then she said they made her ashamed and she didn't want them in the house.

I feel funny talking about this, with the sunlight streaming through the museum's big windows.

"You got any money?" Rio asks. I think awhile about how to answer her. Sarah barely puts up with my visiting Rio. If she knew about the money, she'd take the kids and leave. We almost broke up over money a few years ago, when Sarah was trying to open her own shop.

"I can't give you any more money, Rio. Not this month."

"Sure you can, Cody. I'll hurt myself."



"I can't give you any money."

She leans over and kisses me the way she does sometimes. I'm careful not to kiss back much, not to touch her with my hands. She gets violent if you crowd her.

Outside, Rio lets out one shrill scream as we step into the sunshine. People try not to get caught staring at us. Rio wants a caramel roll, so we get in the car and head for a doughnut shop. Those are good signs, her wanting food, wanting money. Wanting something.

PARKING IN THE GRAVEL behind Sarah's shop, I'm still thinking about Rio. To Sarah she's just a crazy woman. I try to tell her how intelligent Rio is, how sensitive she can be when she's doing well. Sarah just gets mad. She's never been around disturbed people and she doesn't understand.

I slip in the back door the way I always do. The back is a small space with shelves for supplies, screened off from the rest of the shop by flowered curtains. I hear water running and the whining whoosh of blow dryers, scissors clicking and the women talking and rustling

the little plastic aprons they wear.

Some regulars, college girls, say hello to me as I step through the curtains. I smile at them; I don't know their names. Sarah sees me in the mirror but doesn't say anything. She looks like she wants to say something she can't say in front of everybody. She's standing over old Mrs. Cage, waving the dryer, her scissors and long comb palmed in her left hand, her hair tied back in a red scarf. The three girls she has working for her do their hair all different ways, but Sarah keeps hers long. She's not much of an advertisement for the business, but she has a good following, because she likes to talk and she does good work. She's a pretty woman. Not as pretty as Rio would be if she were fixed up, but still, damn pretty.

"The boys are at Mother's," she says. She knows I've

come to take them fishing. She doesn't call me honey.

"I've got to get the tackle from the house," I tell her. "We'll be home by six."

She goes on waving the blow dryer. "I thought you fixed the air-conditioner, Cody. It's still not getting our room cool."

"It needs more Freon. I'll get some from the shop Monday."

"You're so busy," she says. That sounds like a joke, but it isn't. "The secretary from church called after you left this morning. She wants to know if you're going to teach a class again this year."

"I expect I will." I'd like to teach the young-adult class. But if I say that, she'll think about how I've just been to see Rio. Sarah's not a jealous woman, but Rio really bugs her. She knows I knew Rio back when we were kids, although I never paid any attention to her. Everyone in Springfield knew everyone else back then, before the Zenith plant and all the new people came to town. I used to play pickup games at the playground with Rio's big brother, who was killed later in Vietnam. Now she doesn't have any family left, just the old house.

"How was the museum?"

"Okay."

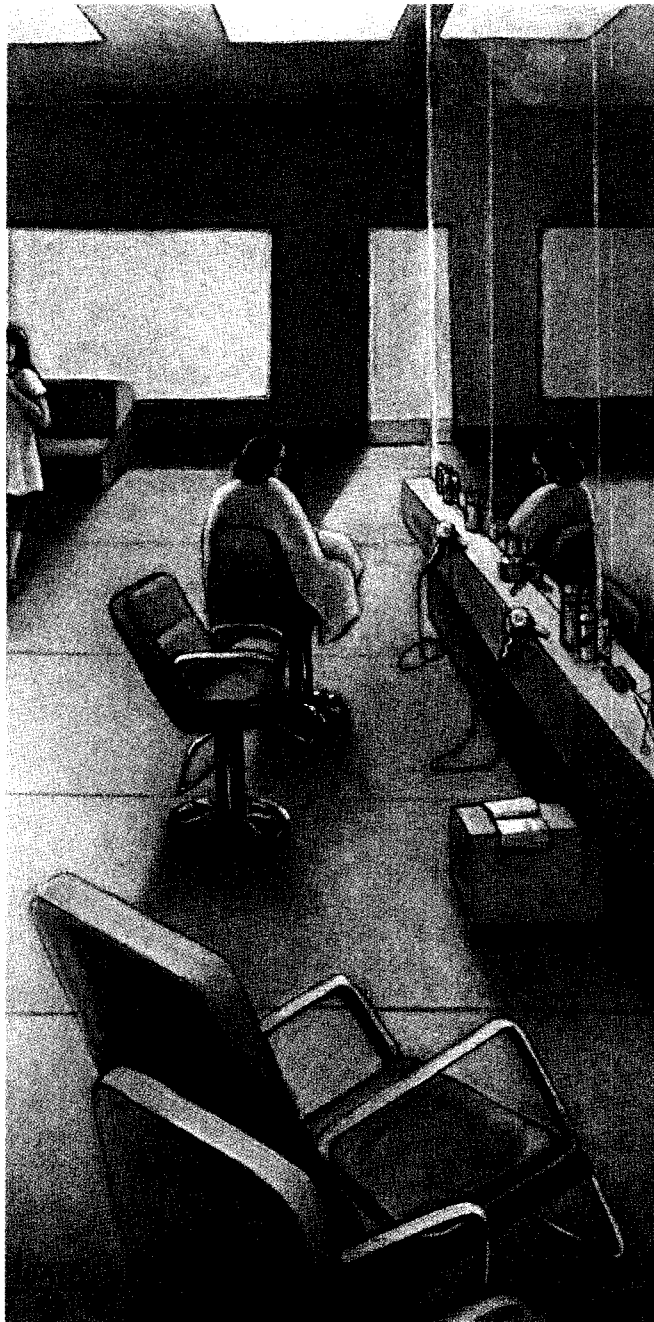
"Don't you get tired of it?"

"A little."

"So why do you go?"

I don't have an answer. Mrs. Cage starts telling us about her daughter, so I head on out. I say good-bye to Sarah. She doesn't answer me.

TEN MINUTES ON INTERSTATE 44 AND A FEW MILES on a bumpy road bring us to Badman's Cove. In an hour we've pulled in a mess of perch. Something's bothering the boys. I can't talk to them the way I used to. They tell me school's going fine and all. I keep after them.



They tell me that their mother has been crying before she goes to work.

"It's weird, Dad," Peter says. "She never cried before. I never saw her cry."

"She did once," Doug says, "when she fell off the ladder and broke her wrist. I had to call an ambulance."

"Women go through these things," I say. "I'll have a talk with her. Hand me that lure, Doug." In sixteen years with Sarah, I've seen her cry twice. Maybe three times. We're going to have to work something out.

THAT NIGHT WE'RE playing rummy across the kitchen counter; the news is over and the kids are in bed, no noise in the apartment other than the sounds of Sarah shuffling cards and the aquarium bubbling in the corner. We're sipping lemonade and Sarah's dealing cards and she starts in giving me hell about Rio.

"Talk to those counselors where you volunteer at, honey. Ask them if your relationship with that girl is healthy. Ask them if you don't have a compulsion."

"I told you that's not how it is," I say. She just tosses her hair back and cuts the

cards with one hand like she does, giving me that look that says, Who's kidding whom? Cutting hair for a living, she listens to women talk all day, and she figures she knows what she's talking about. She wouldn't understand that when Rio's acting right and talks that poetic way, she seems like the sister I never had. I can't tell her that.

"I think there's something nasty about it," Sarah says. "I think you get off on it."

"Rio's got a lot of problems," I tell her.

"Rio's a slut," Sarah says. "Maybe she can't help it. But I don't want you over there. You never got this involved before. You draw first." I take a card.

She's wrong about Rio, but I don't say that; explaining is too hard. Rio's messed up, but she's making progress.

When I met her again, the time the minister and I took her some groceries, you could tell just from looking in her eyes that nobody was home. I've worked with depressed people since, but I never saw a look like that.

That was the night she tried to put out her eyes. We were almost back to the van when we heard hollering from the two kids who were crashing with her. She was standing in the kitchen with her clothes off, flailing at her face with the can opener we'd brought, shrieking and gibbering like she was speaking in tongues. We had to drag her through the snow. Later, at the hospital, she read my palm.

"You used to think it was great that I tried to help people."

"You used to go read to a blind man at the old-folks' home," she says. "I'm not asking you anything unreasonable, honey."

Sarah doesn't push me around like my friends' wives do them. She trusts me around other women. The mistake I made, early on, was in giving her the impression that Rio was a child—I called her a mixed-up kid.

I don't know what to tell her now. When we were first married, Sarah smoked a lot of dope and I got her to quit. That's how I feel about Rio. But I can't tell Sarah that. She'd take it the wrong way.

Or maybe she's got it the right way. I can't tell for sure anymore.

"I don't want this to cause trouble between us."

"You're fooling yourself," Sarah says. "You're falling for her. You talk about her all the time. This could break us up, Cody. I'm not kidding."

"You've got it all wrong."

"You're screwing her or you're going to. Look, Cody, I'm not going to sit here and argue with you. I'm not going to put up with it, either. Think it over." She shuffles the cards over and over. Her hands tremble just the slightest bit. "Why are you doing this to us? Is it just a buzz?"

"I don't know." The conversation is making me feel sick, really sick, to my stomach. I'm hurting with the way I'm hurting Sarah, but I keep thinking about Rio digging at her hand with that pin. And then I'm promising her that I won't see Rio anymore, and Sarah starts crying a little, but she's smiling and kissing me. We feed the fish together and nuzzle each other down the hall. She's kissing me all over my face, and we're not talking about anybody, but I'm thinking about Rio.

MOST WEEKDAYS I'M ON THE ROAD, ANYWHERE BETWEEN Tulsa and Kansas City. We wholesale furniture parts. I start using Saturdays to get caught up at the store. Sundays after church I watch a ball game or take the boys fishing while Sarah does her bookwork and washes clothes. Rio is on my mind, but I don't go over there. Once I call the clinic where Rio used to do group, but she hasn't been around.

After a few weeks Rio starts calling me at work. She tells me about people I don't know, tells me things she's been

doing, like talking to the sun. She never asks anything about me. She never wants to know. She never makes much sense over the phone, but I hate not to talk to her.

She has a lot of stories she tells over and over. Sometimes she's in a concentration camp. Sometimes she's growing up in a one-room cabin. "I slept in the loft with my little brother, William." Rio's voice comes low and throaty over the line. "We used to peek over the edge and watch Ma and Pa do it, and we tried to do it too, but nothing much ever happened. When I was ten and William was six, he got killed by a horse that stepped on his head while he was practicing tying his shoes. We found him with his head mashed into the mud like a half-buried salt block. But the bows on his shoes were perfect."

I don't remember the story going like this. Maybe she's really going to open up this time. She's talking more than she ever did when we were seeing each other.

"Pa beat me for not watching William. I had trouble for weeks when I went to the outhouse. Sometimes I coughed up blood. Ma said it was the Lord's punishment for letting my little brother get killed. I slept alone in the loft and I never peeked over the edge. I thought maybe God killed William to punish us for what we did together." I can hear her crying over the phone. She hardly ever cries. "When Ma told me about sex, it didn't sound like what I remembered seeing. I didn't want to ever do it. But my folks made me marry the boy from down the road."

Rio never was married, never lived on a farm. "I've got to get back to work," I say. The owner always gripes about personal calls. He's watching me from his glassed-in office.

"They took Tommy away, Cody. They take away all my little friends."

"I've got to let you go, Rio. If you have to talk to me, call me on my lunch hour, like I told you."

"Call me, Cody. Come and see me, baby."

"I'm hanging up, Rio."

"You know I don't do anything," she says, "but I'll close my eyes and let you lick me. Let you lick me all you want. Like a pink lolly." She never used to talk that way, about me and her. I worry about her. I can't just hang up on her.

She asks for money. I want to send her a check, but Sarah would know, and Rio would have trouble cashing it. Banks and stores scare her. Too many people.

ANOTHER SATURDAY THE BOYS ARE STAYING WITH Sarah's parents. I'm watching Texas and Oklahoma go at it, and the first snowflakes swirl outside our picture window. The phone rings. The voice is scared and bitchy and for a second I think it's Rio, but of course it's not. It's Sarah. Their voices aren't alike at all. Sarah says Rio came in for a haircut and she's making trouble. Sarah says I've been seeing her and lying about it. "She comes in here and orders us around like a bunch of field hands," Sarah says. "Then she starts in talking dirty and telling us how she killed her husband."

Rio has never killed anybody as far as I know. But I

don't tell Sarah that; it wouldn't make any difference.

"She'll be all right after she talks it out," I say.

"I can't have your girlfriend scaring off my customers," she says. "Will you get the hell down here?" I know it's the wrong move, but I can't help it. I ask her if Rio seems suicidal or anything. She hangs up on me.

And calls right back. "It's slick out," she says. "Be real careful."

COMING IN THE BACK, I HEAR VOICES OUT FRONT, Sarah and Rio. Through the crack in the curtain I see Rio pacing the middle of the room, wearing overalls and a dinky tank top. Her hair's wet and has suds in it, and she's got a pair of scissors, not with her fingers in the handle rings but just holding them in her hand. She waves her arms as she talks. Sarah and the girls and the customers, up out of their chairs, stand in quiet little knots beside the big wall mirrors on each side of the room. I've never seen everybody stand up in the shop before. The mirrors make the room seem full of people. Water runs in one of the shiny black sinks, but nobody pays it any mind.

I start to come in, but Rio puts the scissors in the hammer hook of her jeans. She's muttering like she does sometimes, getting expressions on her face like someone else is talking and she's just listening. Everyone looks scared but sort of fascinated. Except Sarah. On her face I see only loathing.

"My husband looked so much like William it was spooky. On our wedding night I told him I'd be a good wife to him every way except in bed. He gave me a black eye and roped my wrists to the bedposts. In the morning I cut his throat with a razor and made myself some oatmeal."

"Why don't you give me back those scissors," Sarah says. "You hear me, Rio?"

Rio looks at Sarah as if someone had asked her to pass the bread and she didn't have any. "I had a job once," Rio says. "Counting pigs at the stockyards. I couldn't handle it."

"Right," Sarah says. She sees me ease through the curtain. "Get her out of here," she says.

"Don't think you're better than me," Rio says. "Tell us about Jerry, Sarah. How you and Cody talk about him when you screw. How he used to follow you into the locker room at the beauty school and watch you change your clothes."

Damn you, Rio.

"You bastard, Cody," Sarah says. She takes a step forward and Rio leans suddenly toward her, a snakelike sway. Sarah stops.

"Cody has to talk about you to come inside me, Sarah. He must really love you."

Rio's lying, but it gets to me. I keep looking at Sarah and feeling bad, but my pity for Rio crowds everything out—or is it that? I feel sorrier for Rio than I ever have, but at the same time I want her. Maybe it's a kick, like Sarah

says. A buzz. You can have feelings and not have a name for them. You can have feelings that get all glopped together. Whatever it is, I'm sick with it and I want it. My throat tightens and my head aches and sings.

Rio has the scissors in her hand again. She backs into the corner, looking back and forth from me to Sarah. She raises the scissors and uses them like an icepick on the mirror. Long shards of glass topple to the floor and shatter. I catch her hands and take the scissors. She doesn't fight me.

"It's okay, Rio," I tell her. "It's Cody. Cody." She puts her arms around me, crying hard. I see new scabs on her face and arms. Some of the customers are leaving the shop. The others are staring at us. Sarah is on the phone. I say to her, "It's okay."

"You hang on to her," Sarah says. "I called the law."

"I'm going to get her out of here," I say. "It won't do any good for her to get busted." Rio pulls at my shirt collar and rips it. Last time she was locked up she cut her wrists. She was trying for real, not playing like she does.

"You go with her, Cody, you don't come back," Sarah says. She's crying too. "How could you tell her about us?"

"Sarah," I say. Nothing else comes.

"She told me you give her money. She told me what's going on with you two."

"He ties me up," Rio says, smiling at Sarah.

"She doesn't know what she's saying," I say.

"She knows," Sarah says. She grabs a bottle of something off the counter and throws it at the mirror. More shards fall. The shop fills with a musky scent. "She knows," Sarah yells. I've got my coat around Rio's shoulders, helping her out the back.

Even after I get her home, Rio won't calm down. She keeps scratching at her face and I have to hold her hands. Her wrists are as small as a child's. Where she's had stitches, the scars crisscross them like a bracelet of glass wire. I hold her hands in her lap and sit there and watch her cry.

Finally I get her into bed. She doesn't have any heat on and the house is freezing. I light the pilot and set the thermostat. I drive by the shop but the CLOSED—PLEASE CALL AGAIN sign is out. Sarah. No, Sarah. Please, God.

When I pull into our lot, I see Sarah loading suitcases into her car. She has the motor running. She says she's going to her parents. She says she's getting a lawyer.

"Why'd you have to pull this, Cody?" she shouts. I try to take the suitcase from her. It's the one she always puts the kids' clothes in. "What for, Cody? What for?" Every time I try to say something, she screams. When I try to touch her, she gets in the car and locks the doors.

"I don't blame you for being mad," I shout so she can hear me through the car window. "I want to explain," I shout. I bang the side of my fist against the glass. Neighbors are peeking out from behind their curtains.

She says something. It sounds like "No more words." She puts the car in gear and it shimmies slowly down the driveway and into the road. I chase her and stumble in the snow. When I get up, the car is out of sight. □

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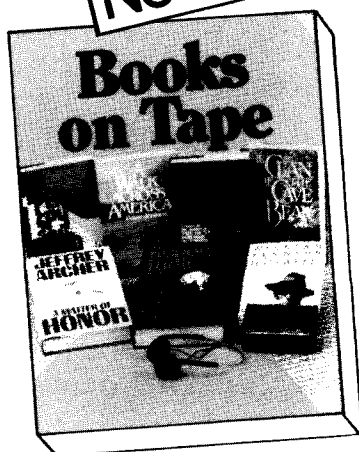
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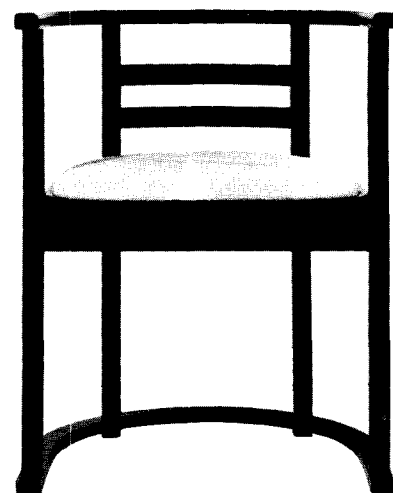


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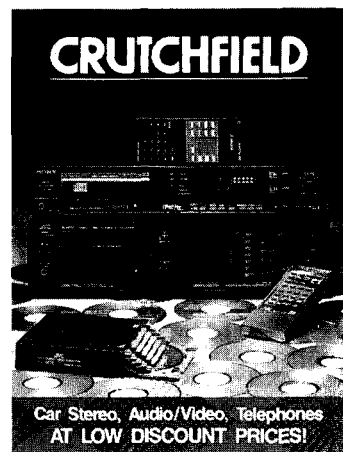
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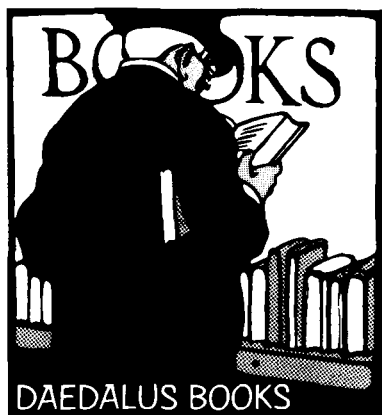
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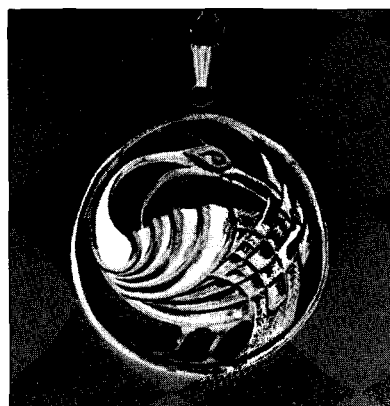
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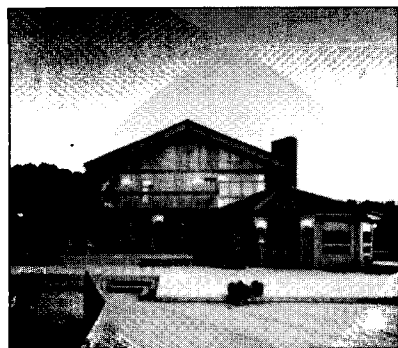
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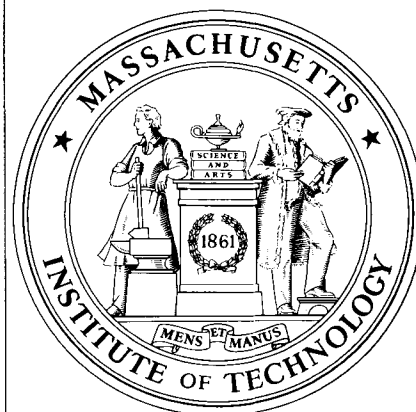
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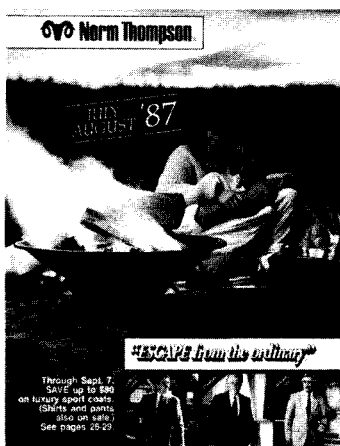


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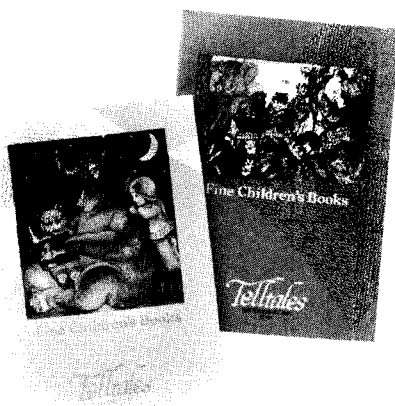
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FOOD

A STIRRING DISH

The pleasures of risotto amply reward the labor it requires

BY CORBY KUMMER

AT THE END OF last summer I was a guest at a New England beach house along with a young woman from Turin named Carla, an enthusiastic cook. After cooking several meals together we decided to treat our hosts to a *risotto ai gamberi*, risotto with shrimp. Carla had brought with her a pound of Arborio rice, the short-grain rice ideally suited to risotto; it is grown in the valley of the Po River in northern Italy, and people there are as devoted to risotto as they are to pasta. Our hosts had been recounting to friends how surprisingly harmonious their two cooks were in deciding what to do with the ingredients available at local farm stands. The risotto would be our triumphal parting gesture.

The rule for making risotto, a dish of such savor and rich, chewy texture that it makes fluffy rice seem insipid, is constant stirring. Arborio rice is heated briefly with a soffritto, or base, of onion and often other aromatic vegetables in butter and oil, and hot broth is added no faster than the rice can absorb it. The whole process takes at least eighteen minutes of close attention and results in an intensely flavored dish that more than compensates for the labor.

Carla and I were in perfect accord on how to make a broth, sautéing onions, celery, carrots, and parsley slowly in olive oil until the onions became translucent, adding fish heads, bones, shrimp shells, and water to cover, simmering for twenty minutes, and straining it. The vegetables were chopped for the soffritto when I prepared for a quick shower. While dressing I plotted my next moves: measuring out the hot broth and adding it slowly to the rice, stirring constantly. When I returned to the kitchen, Carla said merrily, "I put up the rice." I opened the pot to find that she had poured all the broth into the rice and set it to boil. So much for a perfect risotto—or any kind of decent risotto. Deciding not to reveal my keen disappointment, I said simply, "It's ruined," slammed the lid on the pot, and stalked upstairs.

"Shall we all discuss this?" our hosts asked when I returned. "No," I said. "She's the Italian, so we'll just see how her risotto tastes." Carla said, "I make risotto too often to bother with all that stirring. It comes out the same in the end." I laughed in disbelief. The risotto, of course, was very good. The four teenagers at dinner fought the adults for thirds.

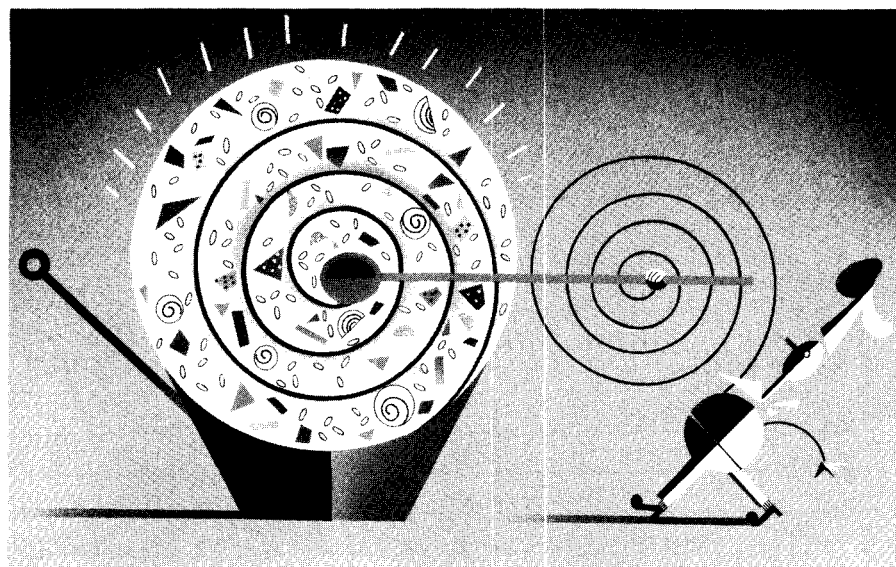
I thought that I had been shown a technique that had eluded generations of exacting and shortsighted Italians, and I embarked on rice-and-risotto researches. I'm sorry to report that boiling Arborio rice as you would other rices, perfectly respectable though the result, does not produce the deep flavor that regular stirring does. But I did discover a number of tricks for making a perfect risotto, and came away more convinced than ever that Arborio rice is grand and irreplaceable, and that even with the stirring, risotto can be as versatile and almost as fast a main course as pasta.

ARBORIO RICE IS more like the kind of rice eaten in Japan than the long-grain rice that is almost universal in the United States. It belongs to the *Japonica* family of short- and medium-grain rice,

whereas American long-grain rice, familiar under the brand names Uncle Ben's and Carolina, among others, belongs to the *Indica* family. (Voguish members of the *Indica* family include cousins of Basmati rice, an aromatic long-grain rice popular in India. The varieties grown here have trade names like Texmati and Della Gourmet, and often their flavor is nutty and more distinct than that of typical American long-grain varieties.) *Japonica* rices are higher than *Indica* rices in amylopectin, a starch more readily released than amylose, the other principal starch in rice. Grains of *Indica* rice, high in amylose, stay dry and distinct when cooked. Long-grain rices are ideal for pilaf, which is rice cooked, covered, in broth that is added all at once. If you try to make risotto with long-grain rice, you will get pilaf, even if you keep stirring and add the broth only as it is absorbed. The dish will have none of the glorious properties of risotto, although it can certainly taste good.

The starch that Arborio releases binds the broth the rice is cooked in, in effect making its own sauce. Arborio rice also absorbs more of the broth, which means that it is more flavorful than long-grain rice—Arborio expands with cooking to more than four times its size, long-grain rice to three times its size. And because it is fatter than long-grain rice, it can be cooked *al dente*, with most of the grain soft and the innermost part slightly chewy but not hard.

Arborio rice is fairly easy to come by, in shops that specialize in Italian food, gourmet shops, and the food sections of department stores. (Or you can order it from the New York City shop Dean & DeLuca at 1-800-221-7714 or 212-431-



1691, or from Select Origins, in Westhampton Beach, N.Y., at 1-800-822-2092 or 516-288-1381.) Packages are often labeled Superfino in big letters. "Superfino" denotes size and is the largest of four grades of rice sold in Italy, all of which are short- or medium-grain *Japonica* rices. The smaller grades, comune and semifino, are nearly always too soft when cooked for risotto. The third, fino, is less well adapted to risotto than superfino, the grade of Arborio and also Carnaroli. Carnaroli and Vialone Nano, a rice of the semifino grade (*nano* means dwarf), both have great snob appeal among northern Italian risotto makers. Venetians consider Vialone Nano the true risotto rice, and a Milanese *buongustaio* will be downcast at the sight of a non-Carnaroli risotto. Carnaroli is especially hard to find, and expensive. I have found it and paid for it, and it makes a delicate risotto that holds together just right; Vialone Nano does too, and its smaller size makes an appealingly dense risotto. I am perfectly content, though, with Arborio.

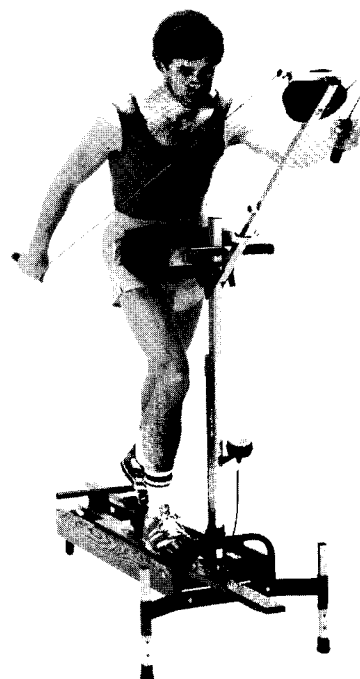
JUST ABOUT ANYTHING can go into a risotto. It is an easier solution to leftovers than pasta is, in that you don't have to worry about turning them into a sauce: the broth and the starch from the rice will welcome chopped anything. It is more time-consuming than pasta, in that while it cooks, your hands aren't always free to prepare what you'll put into the risotto next, so it's best to have the meat or fish or vegetables cooked and chopped before you start. But risotto can be interrupted, and experienced risotto makers have no trouble cooking something else while making sure that the rice doesn't stick.

The broth is often the principal flavoring, and homemade is best. Italians find straight chicken broth too pronounced for risotto, and use a broth made of a combination of veal, beef, and chicken bones. They also use bouillon cubes a lot, being less sensitized to salt than Americans have become. (An alarming number of Italian cookbooks, even those that claim to be strictly traditional, use bouillon cubes as a standard ingredient.) If you don't have homemade broth, you can use a combination of chicken and beef bouillon cubes, in a dilution that suits your taste for salt. Canned broth is often even saltier than cubes dissolved in the amount of water the package calls for; I use one part canned broth to three parts water. You

can use other liquids in place of broth. For example, dried mushrooms, such as porcini (cepes) and morels, make an excellent risotto—a third of a cup, soaked for twenty minutes in warm water to cover, will be ample for one and a half cups of uncooked rice—and you can use the soaking liquid, strained through a paper towel, for broth. Or if you parboil broccoli or asparagus or leeks or even kohlrabi, save some of the water you boil the vegetables in and concentrate it by boiling it down to the amount you need. Sometimes the first liquid added is a half cup or so of dry white wine. Whatever broth you use will be further boiled down in the risotto, so you should like the flavor of it at the outset, because it will get stronger. Italian broth is much lighter than a consommé or even a flavorful stock. The liquid should be simmering before you start the risotto.

The proportion of broth to rice given in many books is two to one. I prefer the proportion given in *Risotto: The Classic Rice Dish of Northern Italy*, a book by Judith Barrett and Norma Wasserman that will be published in November. Their standard recipe calls for five and a half cups of broth to one and a half cups of rice, or a bit more than three to one. The bit more is part of a trick, which I'll come to soon, that alone is worth the price of the book (the recipes are quite appealing too). A quarter cup to a third of a cup of raw rice will be enough to serve one as a first course, and a half cup will serve one as a main course, so their standard recipe serves from three to six. For three quarters of a cup of rice they call for three cups of broth; for two cups of rice, seven cups; for three cups of rice, ten and a half cups.

THE SOFFRITTO of a risotto nearly always includes onion. You can add parsley or carrots or celery or all three, depending on how strongly you want to flavor the rice; if you want to taste something distinctly, you should wait to add it until halfway through the cooking, so that it does not overcook. Butter alone is used in northern Italy, and oil in Tuscany. Butter is best if a good deal of cheese is to be added; oil is better for fish. A combination can be considered all-purpose. For one and a half cups of rice, start with three tablespoons of fat and a third of a cup of minced onion. Use a wide pan, to facilitate even evaporation. Enamelled cast-iron pans and pans with copper or aluminum bases sandwiched in stainless steel are ideal.



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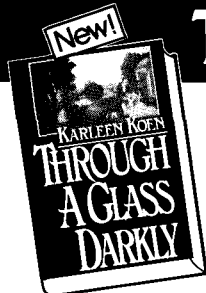
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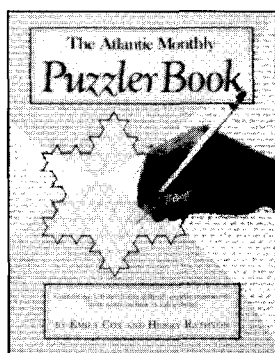
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Sauté the onion in the hot butter or oil for a minute or so, until it turns translucent, and if you are including other vegetables, sauté them with the onion for five more minutes. Add the rice (unwashed, to retain the starch) and sauté another minute. The fat should cover each grain, and the rice will turn from an opaque white to a translucent gold. At this point you can put in a portion of the other ingredients you have chosen—for example, artichokes or mushrooms, which will soften and almost melt into the rice. Add a half cup of hot broth and set a timer for eighteen minutes. Stir with a wooden spoon until the liquid is almost completely absorbed. When the spoon leaves a clean trail in the rice with no liquid seeping in to cover it, add another half cup of broth. Continue adding liquid, which should be kept at a low simmer, in half-cup increments as needed. The simmer of the risotto should be fairly high, with bubbles appearing in several places on the surface but not covering it. If it is too slow, you won't get enough liquid in and the rice will be too crunchy; if too fast, the risotto will stick to the bottom of the pan. Don't worry about how many minutes elapse between additions or how much of the broth remains to be used. The pan and the flame will determine the rate, and you'll find that at the end you've added just about the amount of broth called for. (If you run short near the end, put some water on to boil and add it from the kettle.)

After eight or ten minutes you should add ingredients that will benefit from being simmered hard for ten or fifteen minutes: vegetables that you haven't parboiled, soaked and sliced dried mushrooms. Leftover meat, or fish, or pre-cooked vegetables whose texture you want to preserve, such as tiny peas, should be added near the end. Barrett and Wasserman hold fast to the eighteen-minute rule, but it takes Arborio rice longer—twenty to twenty-five minutes—to reach the point at which it's pleasantly firm but not hard and raw tasting. Start sampling after eighteen minutes. The rice is done when the very center turns from hard to pliable and the grain tastes fully cooked but is still resilient. A cook I know says that she has eliminated all worry about just how long a risotto should take by calling a certain friend when she begins adding broth: the conversation always takes exactly the right time. (The cook prefers to keep her friend's phone number to herself, however.)

Just before you serve the risotto, you can add the usual enrichment of a table spoon of butter or more oil and a quart cup of freshly grated Parmesan cheese if it suits the risotto. The conventional wisdom is, roughly, yes for most vegetables and no for fish, but most chefs add: sprinkling of Parmesan to fish and sea food risottos on the sly—"like a benediction," in the words of Franco Colom bani, a longtime restaurateur and godfather to many Italian cooks. Heated plates will help keep the risotto from becoming too solid and sticky. The trick like so much solves this problem: just before serving add between a quart and a half cup more broth, so that the risotto will stay creamy. Tradition says that all the liquid should be absorbed when the risotto is served, but the extra liquid won't make the risotto soupy and will give the rice, which is still hot something to absorb as it cools. (Italians call this looser consistency *all'onda*, or "wavy," and Venetians prefer it.) Colom bani says that after all the last-minute additions are made, the risotto must sit for exactly two minutes before going to table, so that all the flavors blend and deepen. But then you must serve and eat it immediately. Risotto cannot be reheated without becoming disappointingly soft.

For specific ingredients and appealing recipes, consult Barrett and Wasserman's *Risotto*, which also gives ideas for left over risotto. *Marcella's Italian Kitchen*, by Marcella Hazan, has the best risotto chapter of any of her books. The recipe for risotto with fennel; with savoy cabbage, Parmesan, and pancetta (un smoked bacon); and with fresh tomato and basil are especially appealing.

Barbara Kafka's *Microwave Gourmet* which is so authoritative and original that it will give owners of microwave ovens new self-esteem, provides directions for risotto that needs to be stirred only once. It is quite good and certainly easier, though not to my mind as richly flavored as what comes from the slow evaporation of broth and cooking liquids. (Kafka's techniques for fish, however, are wholly persuasive and have prompted me to buy a microwave oven I will discuss them in another article.)

I've tried the easy ways out. But I still like having control over a bubbling pot of risotto, deciding how fast to add the broth, when to add the featured ingredients, and just when the rice is cooked. plan to be at the stove at the end of this summer when Carla puts up the rice. ☐

MUSIC

BERG'S "LULU"

A modern masterpiece that has come into its own

BY WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

ALBAN BERG'S *Wozzeck*, which received its premiere in 1925, is not only one of the few important twentieth-century operas; it is now generally recognized as one of the very greatest operas of all time—to be ranked with the masterpieces of Monteverdi, Gluck, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Musorgsky, and Debussy. Over the past eight years it has gradually become clear that Berg's other opera, *Lulu*, which was left unfinished at his death in 1935, is just as great as *Wozzeck*—indeed, perhaps even greater.

But for more than forty years *Lulu* remained a mystery, a tantalizing fragment. In an article published less than a year after Berg's death, his friend and official biographer, Willi Reich, spoke of *Lulu* as a work virtually complete: "Only the instrumentation of a few places in the middle of the last act was not finished and this could easily be carried out from the given material by some friend familiar with Berg's work." And Reich repeated this claim in his biography, *Alban Berg* (1937). But when *Lulu* received its premiere, in Zurich, on June 2, 1937, it was presented in a curiously truncated form. The first two acts were followed not by the third act, its orchestration completed by another hand, but rather by the two orchestral fragments from the third act that Berg had incorporated into the five-movement *Lulu Suite*, which he had prepared the year before his death. These functioned as background music for a pantomime in which the opera's concluding scene was enacted. Thus about twelve minutes of music stood in place of the hour-long third act. This was true of all subsequent productions until February 24, 1979, when the complete three-act *Lulu*, conducted by Pierre Boulez, was finally performed, at the Paris Opéra.

To get an idea of how utterly unrepresentative all the earlier, truncated productions were, imagine a performance of Wagner's *Die Walküre* in which the first two acts were followed not by the third act but by the two brief concert excerpts

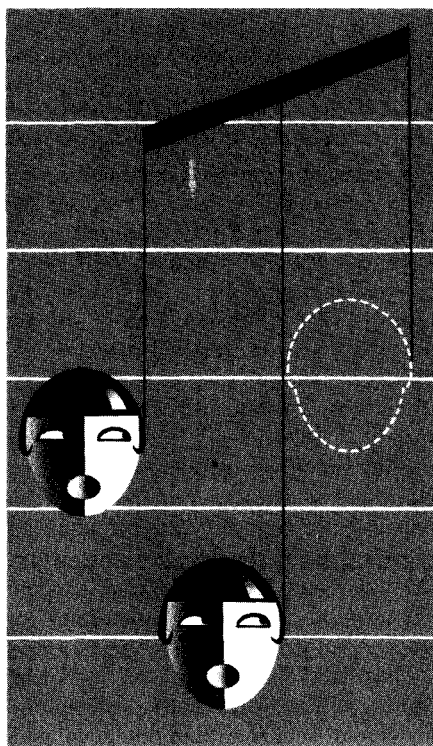
known as "The Ride of the Valkyries" and "Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire Music"—while onstage the complex action between Wotan and Brünnhilde was mimed. Indeed, such treatment did even greater damage to *Lulu* than it would to *Die Walküre*, for the two halves of the action of *Lulu*—from the beginning through the first scene of Act II, and from the second scene of Act II through to the end—are mirror images of each other, their symmetry reflected in the music on many different levels.

Berg took his libretto from two plays, *Earth Spirit* (1895) and *Pandora's Box* (1902), by the turn-of-the-century playwright Frank Wedekind. The two were originally conceived as one. In both the protagonist is Lulu, an archetypal embodiment of sensuality and the eternal feminine, part whore and part waiflike innocent, unscrupulous in her exercise of her powers over men and yet touchingly vulnerable. After a brief prologue in which an Animal Tamer invites us into

his menagerie to view the animals, *Earth Spirit* traces Lulu's rise in the world, through her successive marriages to the Medical Specialist Dr. Goll, the Painter Schwarz, and her longtime lover and patron, Dr. Schön, a newspaper editor, whom she murders in the final scene. The still wilder and more surrealistic *Pandora's Box* traces her decline, from her escape from prison—contrived by the lesbian Countess Geschwitz, perhaps with the aid of Dr. Schön's son, Alwa, and an Acrobat, Rodrigo—through her financial ruin in Paris, to her sad end as a common prostitute in London, where she and the devoted Countess Geschwitz are murdered by Jack the Ripper.

Berg emphasized the symmetry first of all by cutting down the number of clients who visit Lulu in her London garret from four to three—a Professor, a Negro, and Jack—and by stipulating that their roles be taken by the same singers who have taken those of her three victims: the Medical Specialist, the Painter, and Dr. Schön, respectively. But there are countless other correspondences between the work's two halves, from the repetition of whole sections of music to small motivic, tonal, and sonorous reminiscences. Taken as a whole, *Lulu* is a work of tremendous cumulative power, the correspondences between its two halves giving a mythic, dreamlike sense of timelessness to the ongoing dramatic action.

Why then should it have taken so long for us to experience it as a whole? Soon after the premiere of the truncated version, Berg's widow, Helene, began saying that she found the work perfectly satisfactory in that form. And she later claimed, repeatedly but falsely, that it had been pronounced unfinishable by Berg's two closest friends and musical associates, Arnold Schoenberg and Anton von Webern, and also by the composer Alexander von Zemlinsky, Schoenberg's mentor and brother-in-law, to whom Berg had dedicated his *Lyric Suite*. In the years following the war Helene Berg's puzzling resolution that *Lulu* should never be completed hardened, and she even forbade scholars to inspect the surviving manuscripts of Act III. Reich, probably acting under her influence, omitted from the 1965 revision of his biography his earlier statement that the work could be easily completed, and discussions of *Lulu* began referring to the "sketches" for Act III—even though it had earlier been public knowledge

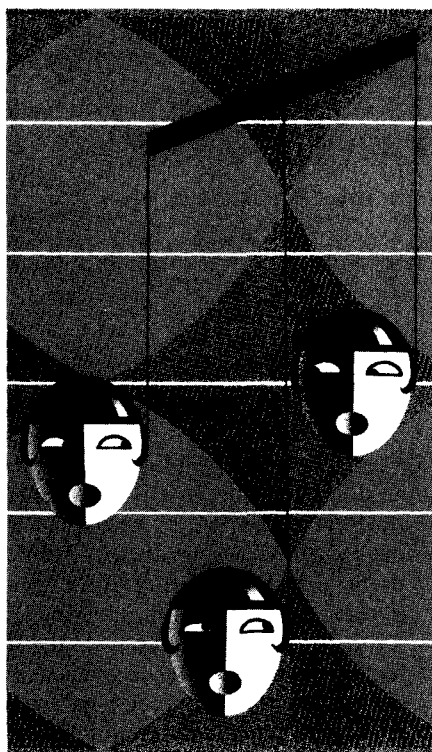


that Berg had completed the actual composition. Thus the legend grew that *Lulu* was condemned to remain forever a fragment.

In the meantime, however, Universal Edition of Vienna, Berg's publishers and the possessors of the manuscripts of Act III, knew that Helene Berg's demands that the work never be completed had no legal force. So in 1962 they secretly engaged the Viennese composer Friedrich Cerha to complete it. He had done so by 1974, but it was only with Helene Berg's death, in 1976, at age ninety-one, that the way was finally cleared for the performance and publication of the *Lulu* that Berg had envisioned. A little over two years later the Paris premiere took place.

During the spring of 1979 the Paris performance was recorded, and it was soon issued on LP. It has recently been issued on three compact discs (Deutsche Grammophon 415 489-2). One feels tentative about evaluating the only extant recorded performance of a work as complex as *Lulu*, but I find all the singers excellent, and Boulez's direction is, as always, beautifully shaped and meticulous in detail. As *Lulu*, Teresa Stratas is by turns thrillingly powerful and silkily seductive, taking the role's frequent high Ds with remarkable ease. Franz Mazura is equally powerful as the canny, threatening, hopelessly involved Dr. Schön, and Toni Blankenheim sings the role of the wise, cynical old scoundrel Schigolch—who seems to be, but then turns out not to be, *Lulu*'s father—with fine comic sense. The opera's two tenors, Kenneth Riegel as Alwa and Robert Tear as the Painter, are convincingly ardent in their pursuit of *Lulu*; Gerd Nienstedt struts and swaggers his way through the roles of the Animal Tamer and the Acrobat with splendid effect; and Yvonne Minton is a rich-voiced Countess Geschwitz.

THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE of *Lulu* is demonstrably different from that of *Wozzeck*. During the years that separated the two operas, Berg abandoned the "free atonal" idiom of *Wozzeck* and his other early works, and adopted the twelve-tone method, which had recently been developed by his teacher Schoenberg. The transitional work is the Chamber Concerto. Berg began composing it in the spring of 1923, as soon as he had finished correcting the proofs of the vocal score of *Wozzeck*, which had been published that January at his expense.



Completed in the fall of 1925, the Chamber Concerto is attractively scored but rather static and contrived, lacking the spontaneous expressiveness of *Wozzeck* and Berg's other free atonal works. Of far greater importance is the superbly expressive *Lyric Suite* for string quartet (1925–1926), in which Berg for the first time made the language of twelve-tone composition his own.

All during this period Berg, encouraged by the great success of *Wozzeck*, had had it in mind to compose a second opera, and in early 1926 he began considering what text to set. For a long time he wavered between the two Wedekind plays and Gerhart Hauptmann's *And Pippa Dances*, and as late as January of 1928 he seemed to have settled on the Hauptmann play. But in April the negotiations with Hauptmann's publishers broke down, and Berg abandoned the project. The following October, having probably already begun work on *Lulu* during the summer, he initiated negotiations with Wedekind's widow. In the spring of 1929 he was interrupted by a commission from the soprano Ružena Herlinger, who asked him to write a concert aria for her. But the interruption proved fruitful, for the resulting work, *Der Wein*, gave Berg a chance to explore what would become the vocal and instrumental world of *Lulu*.

Despite the differences between that world and the world of *Wozzeck*, no one who loves *Wozzeck* should find *Lulu* inac-

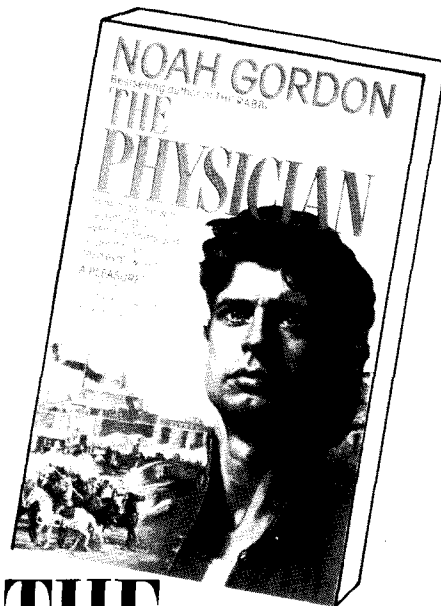
cessible. The libretto, which required Berg to do a great deal more rearranging of the literary sources than did that of *Wozzeck*, is complex and even puzzling. But once it is mastered, the listener who is familiar with *Wozzeck* and Berg's other earlier works will find himself thoroughly at home with *Lulu*.

The peculiar expressiveness of Berg's music had always derived from his unique ability to play tonal implications against atonal irresolution, to keep the listener's attention alive by encouraging traditional tonal interpretation while withholding the final stability afforded by settling in a particular tonality. Once he had begun to write twelve-tone music, he merely continued and deepened his exploration of tonal ambiguity as an expressive resource. Unlike Schoenberg and Webern, Berg based his twelve-tone works on tone rows that encouraged quasi-tonal formations, and his tone rows, unlike theirs, are usually associated with particular melodic contours. Moreover, *Lulu* is based not on just one tone row—as Schoenberg had dogmatically decreed that all twelve-tone works should be—but on many related ones. And since some of these are associated with specific characters, they often take on the function of Wagnerian leitmotifs. Many features of tonal music and of pre-Wagnerian opera are retained (or revived) in *Lulu*. The bass lines, for example, move in a linear and directed way that is not characteristic of twelve-tone music and that makes the harmony above them sound more nearly tonal than it actually is. And there are many separate "numbers" of the sort that Wagner had banished from opera: arias, duets, a quartet, even two double sextets. All of these traditional procedures, employed with great rhythmic and textural inventiveness and variety, help to guide the listener through the complex musical and dramatic relationships of *Lulu*.

The musical organization of *Lulu* is explained, in fascinating and exhaustive detail, in two excellent books, Douglas Jarman's *The Music of Alban Berg* (1979) and George Perle's *The Operas of Alban Berg: Volume Two/Lulu* (1985). But the crucial fact, from the listener's point of view, is that the music of *Lulu*, though organized by different means, does not sound all that different from that of *Wozzeck*. Unlike Webern and so many other composers, Berg did not become more spare and sparse when he adopted the twelve-tone method. Indeed, although

Lulu employs a smaller orchestra than does *Wozzeck*, its music is more sumptuous and luxuriant, more richly suggestive. *Wozzeck* mingles fantasy and reality, but the fantasy is all the product of the characters' imaginations, and the social world of the opera is very limited. In *Lulu* the drama itself is fantastic, even unrealistic, and the social range is enormous—all the way from the handsomely appointed drawing room of the house that Lulu shares first with Dr. Schön and then with his son, Alwa, and the extravagant Paris salon, down to the sleazy garret of the final scene. Thus *Lulu* offered Berg the opportunity to write music of even greater variety than we find in *Wozzeck*. While many composers, not including Webern, have been reduced to rigid sterility by the constraints of the twelve-tone method, Berg seems to have been liberated by it, enabled to work on a broader and grander scale than was possible for him before.

Lulu is almost exactly twice as long as *Wozzeck*, consisting of three acts, each of which lasts an hour, as against the earlier work's three half-hour acts. But throughout those three hours there is not one false move. Berg has so perfectly imagined music that projects every expressive nuance of the text and the action—and has so expertly pruned the dead wood from *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*—that Wedekind's strangely moving celebration of sensuality, in all its destructiveness and insidious corruption, takes on a grandeur and a stunning clarity not found in the original plays. No one who has heard them can ever forget such small details as the spidery offstage "Jazzband" in Act I, scene 3, or the virophone's rendering of the doorbell that frequently punctuates the action, or the slithery alto-saxophone phrases that characterize Lulu at her most seductive, or the rain on the roof of the last scene's garret (tremolo strings) as the ghostly music of a hurdy-gurdy (offstage woodwinds) floats up from the street below. Nor can one forget such large set pieces as Lulu's powerful duet with Dr. Schön in Act I, scene 2; or her duets with Alwa in Act II, scenes 1 and 2; or the mysterious Marquis's attempt in Act III, scene 1—executed to the accompaniment of a florid, oily solo-violin obbligato—to enroll Lulu in a high-class Cairo brothel; or the poignant, shocking return, as Lulu confronts Jack in the final scene, of the music that earlier represented the hypnotic attraction between her and Dr. Schön; or, in the opera's concluding



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bars, the dying Countess Geschwitz's pledge of eternal fidelity.

What we need now is more recordings of the complete three-act *Lulu*. Fine as Boulez's performance is, a masterpiece like *Lulu* has more facets than any one performance can ever reveal. Christoph von Dohnányi's 1976 recording of the two-act version, with the great Hans Hotter as Schigolch, was more expansive than is Boulez's recording and had more beautiful orchestral playing, by the Vienna Philharmonic. It is now out of print. One hopes that Dohnányi will either make a new, complete recording or at least record the third act. Also, a recording from James Levine, who has been conducting excellent performances of the three-act *Lulu* at the Met since 1980—one of which was televised and has circulated widely in videotape copies—would be most welcome. Karl Böhm's 1968 recording of the two-act version lacked the terrific intensity of the Boulez and the expansiveness of the Dohnányi but was admirably clear and straightforward, and had memorable performances by Evelyn Lear and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as Lulu and Dr. Schön. Now available only in a ten-LP set of all of Berg's music (Deutsche Grammophon 413 797-1), it should certainly be reissued in a more convenient form.

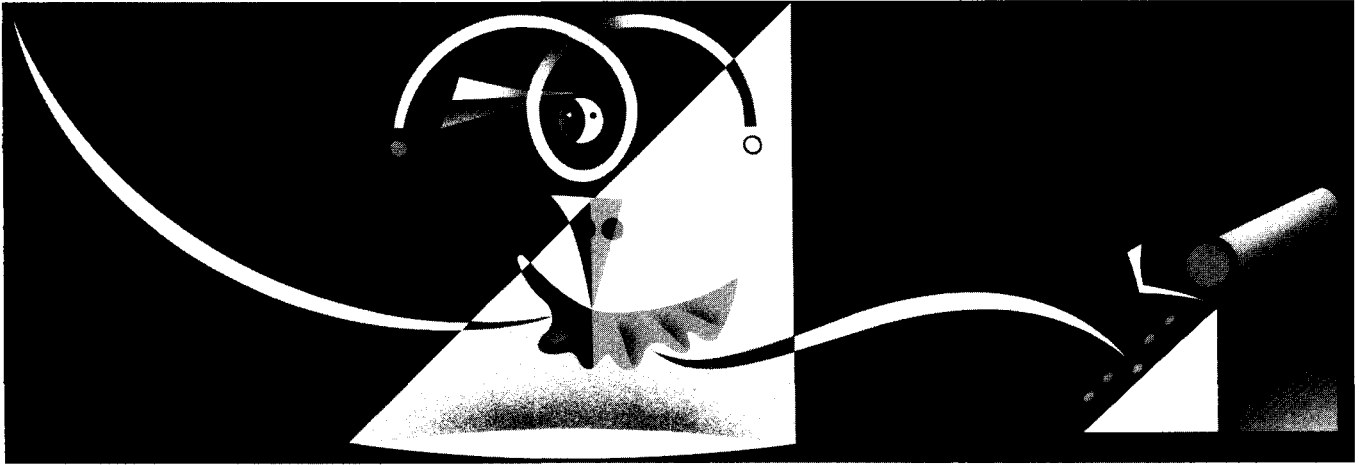
IN THE SPRING of 1925 Berg initiated a long, passionate, but probably never consummated love affair with Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, the sister of the playwright Franz Werfel and the sister-in-law of the omnipresent Alma Mahler Werfel. In a 1931 letter to Hanna, Berg wrote that the effort of maintaining the public façade of an ideally happy marriage to Helene "has made me into a double or, better said, a play-acting person." He added, "Everything that you may hear of me, and perhaps even read about me, pertains, insofar as it is not completely false . . . only to a person who constitutes only a completely exterior layer of myself, to a part of me which in the course of recent years has separated itself . . . from my real existence and has formed a detached being, the one I seem to my surroundings and to the world."

The affair, which came to light only in the late 1970s, was deeply connected with Berg's creative life and, I think, specifically with his conflicted relation to the whole idea of twelve-tone composition. In 1977, in the course of his re-

search on Berg, George Perle discovered that the *Lyric Suite*—in which, significantly, Berg quotes from the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*—contains numerous coded references to the affair with Hanna, and similar references in *Lulu* have subsequently been discovered. It is surely no coincidence that the spring of 1925 was also just the time when Berg was struggling to complete the Chamber Concerto, the work in which he took his first steps toward adopting the twelve-tone method. In letters he wrote to Schoenberg and Webern during this period, Berg spoke repeatedly, earnestly and self-deprecatingly of his attempts to attain the goal of "strict twelve-tone composition." Yet in *Lulu* and his other twelve-tone works he bent the method to his own expressive needs, taking considerable liberties with it that were duly noted, and later censured, by the ever watchful Schoenberg. In a 1925 letter to Helene, attempting to reassure her about his relation to Hanna, Berg suggested a connection between fidelity to his marriage and fidelity to his master. His "conservative disposition," he wrote, ensured his "faithfulness toward you, and also toward myself, music Schoenberg (and *he* really makes it hard for one)."

Clearly, Berg needed to see himself as a driven, deeply conflicted Romantic hero, torn between what he saw as the world's demands for conformity and respectability and his own desires for a secret, passionate, underground existence. When Wagner was composing *Tristan*, he had felt the need for a similar and similarly unconsummated affair with Mathilde Wesendonk. The affair did not "inspire" him to compose *Tristan*; rather, the new emotional and musical territory he was exploring in *Tristan* made it necessary for him to establish, in the world of his personal relations, a plausible objective correlative for what he was expressing in his work. Just so with Berg. His really important romantic attachment was not to Hanna but rather to those aspects of the musical past—to tonality and to operatic tradition—that Schoenberg seemed to have banished from "the music of the future" (Wagner's phrase) by creating, and imposing on his students, the twelve-tone method. And Berg's love affair with his musical past did not, happily, remain unconsummated. *Lulu* stands as the supreme embodiment of its consummation and of Berg's genius for using musical tradition to help him realize his own originality. □

BOOKS



POET OF THE DANCE

BY SANFORD SCHWARTZ

DANCE WRITINGS
by Edwin Denby.
Alfred A. Knopf, \$18.95.

EDWIN DENBY HAS a particular tone of complex innocence and directness. In his essays and reviews about dance and ballet, which have been collected in *Dance Writings*, he is both charming and unexpectedly invigorating. Denby often writes a kind of sentence in which the words do not coincide immediately with the larger meaning; you think you know where he is going in a sentence, but his meaning is somehow stronger than the words themselves. Many of the pages in his hefty book are only mildly interesting; you read with little desire to mark a passage. Yet you develop a taste for Denby's trim, spartan, unostentatiously ilky style and his odd, stimulating phrases. You keep reading *Dance Writings* in order to encounter the next one.

Edwin Denby was a poet, reviewer, and essayist. His father was a diplomat, and Edwin was born in China. He went to Harvard. He did a variety of theater work in Germany in the twenties, and performed with the dancer Cläre Eckstein. By the mid-thirties he was writing about ballet and dance in New York. His busiest period as a dance reviewer was the forties, and his best pieces come from that time. He brought out two collections of dance writing: *Looking at the Dance* (1949) and *Dancers, Buildings and*

People in the Streets (1965). He also brought out some volumes of poetry and a novel. Denby took his life in 1983, at the age of eighty. He was a slim and nicely proportioned man with an old, faraway look in his eyes. In appearance, he suggested characters from Shakespeare. One felt, This is Hamlet in his later years, with a bit of a jester and a courtier thrown in.

Virtually all of Denby's work on ballet and dance, including pieces he did not publish, has been brought together in *Dance Writings*. It is an unusually attractive large paperback with informative essays by the editors, Robert Cornfield and William MacKay. The work reproduced on the cover is a black-and-tan Man Ray picture, *Silhouette* (1916), of stylized dancers. It is a modern—and a sweet and inviting—version of a Greek vase painting, and it is a good choice for Denby, because he makes a classical, formalist aesthetic sweet and inviting too. The large story he tells is about, as he puts it, the “deprovincialization” of American ballet and dance. Denby wants to show how America's contribution to a world-class dance art is a certain stimulating blankness, emptiness, optimism, sense of space. But he lays down no rules; he doesn't say that a significant dance art ought to look like this and not that. He leaves you with a gently liberating sense that an art of high style can appear in any shape or form.

Denby uses the biggest, most obvious and hackneyed words of praise over and over. Ballets, music, sets, and performers are “interesting,” “very beautiful,” “extremely brilliant,” “pleasing,” “very nice,” “pleasant,” “happy.” A work is “sincere.” The audience “sin-

cerely” feels a ballerina's art. Denby isn't ironic. He admires these public words. He can sound as if he's parodying the oh-so-polite gentleman reviewer. His politeness and old-fashioned courteousness and his appreciation of good manners and properness ought to make him seem musty. But he is, rather, driving. His words leave us with a sensation of being energized and thrust forward (when he admires a piece or a performer), or of being robbed, or pulled back (when he describes someone or a piece that doesn't succeed).

For someone whose knowledge of and appreciation for dance is small and who has been drawn to Denby out of an interest in his considerable reputation and a love for criticism in itself, reading him produces the same experience as ballet or dance. A typical Denby piece is gleaming, avid, smiling, always “up.” The aggressive part of Denby is the way he refuses to be conventionally probing. His tone is one of resolve. It is there in any single sentence. It is like the attitude of goodness, lovingness, and appreciativeness that a child wishes to adopt toward his parents and the world after he has done something for which he feels embarrassment or even shame (and that probably no one knows about except himself).

In Arlene Croce's dance criticism the word rhythms are dancelike too, but different; her rhythms are sensuous, slowly swirling, occasionally labyrinthine and hard to follow. Croce and Denby complement each other. She writes, in a sense, as the star and the love object of a ballet; she registers things that happen to her as she moves through space. She is the passive center of the story. Denby

writes, as it were, as the darting, efficient, and faceless male who keeps attending to the woman who is the center of the story.

In his introduction to an earlier Denby book, Frank O'Hara compared Denby to Lamb and Hazlitt. (O'Hara's introduction is reprinted in *Dance Writings*.) Denby is not another Hazlitt. Hazlitt is impatient, reckless, vehement, passionate. There is a connection, though, between Denby and Lamb; they write with a similar temperamental distaste for the self-important man and gesture. There is a similar underlying sense of forlorn isolation in them, and they want to make us more aware of the group act—they like situations where one ego is not lording it and there is a friendly concert of voices. Denby might also be compared to the Swiss writer Robert Walser, whose most compelling work (of the small amount of his work that has been translated into English) is the novel *Jakob von Gunten*. Jakob tells his own story. It's about a school for butlers that he attends in Germany in the years before the First World War. He's a bit of a bad boy, but he genuinely wants to be a good servant, to be "small" and anonymous. We don't always know how to take what he says, but he isn't simply a charmer or a pipsqueak or a little saint. He has a weird and powerful and somewhat sad voice.

DENBY'S EARLY WORK was for the bi-monthly magazine *Modern Music*. Then, from the fall of 1942 to the fall of 1945, he wrote extensively for the *New York Herald Tribune*. There are more than two hundred pages here from those *Trib* days. He must have worked like a dog.

Denby clearly loved the idea of writing for a big daily, and his bosses must have been surprised and pleased by his clarity, good humor, and stamina. Reading these reviews, you can see why his writing career didn't go on forever; these few years of hard work compress what for most critics would be a lifetime of work. (Denby says, in another place, that the war years saw a flowering of ballet and dance in New York.) He's always the modest reporter first. He doesn't show off his learning. In an indirect way, though, he has a large, husbanding voice. He's educating the American public on how to look at and appreciate ballet, dance, and movement in general. There's something quietly great about the way he goes out and gently

scrutinizes ballroom dancers, ice skaters, the Rockettes, ballet dancers at the opera, modern dance, the role of management, individual stars, performers at the circus, and serious contemporary ballet.

Denby's descriptions have a wonderful period flavor. They bring back the tone of America in the forties. I mean the sweet, innocent, corny America of the war years—the image of boys and girls at a soda fountain.

Denby has to be read carefully; he slips in observations that other writers would clear a lot of space for. He says that a flamenco dancer "always seems to have more expressiveness than he needs for a gesture, a kind of reserve of it. . . ." Talking about tap dancing, he says that "in taps you see and hear two different rhythms, both of them in the



same strict musical meter. In ballet you often look at a free meter and listen to a strict one." A gypsy dancer, Denby notes, can "go into or come out of a dance without embarrassment."

About Martha Graham, whom he greatly admires, Denby says, "You watch her as intently as if you were perturbed." Her *Punch and the Judy* has "the general air of middle-class self-importance and nervous activity." George Balanchine's *Mozartiana* is "as full of personal life as an ancient town on the Mediterranean on a holiday morning in the bright sun." Sonja Henie, the ice skater, "doesn't make her numbers express any more interesting emotion than ease." He says that her skaters "leap correctly and oddly, they skate clumsily and delicately, and you see the point of the difference."

Here is Denby on Frederick Ashton,

in 1939: "He derives too, it seems to me, from the kind of awkward and inspired dancing that young people do when they come back from their first thrilling ballet evening and dance the whole ballet they have seen in their own room in a kind of trance. The steps do not look like school steps (though they are as a matter of fact correct); they are like discoveries, like something you do not know you can do, with the deceptive air of being incorrect and accidental that romantic poetry has."

About stage decor, Denby says something childlike, direct, unarguable, and startling. "The reason easel painters are better designers for ballet than anyone else," he writes, "is that they are the only craftsmen professionally concerned with what keeps pictures alive for years on end. When they know their trade they make pictures that hold people's interest for hundreds of years, so making one that will be interesting to look at for twenty minutes is comparatively easy for them."

I think that Denby's greatest sentence is this: "It seems to me that Offenbach humor, like Mozart's, is poised on the suggestion that false love and true love are not as different as one might wish; they are both of them really tender. Denby's perception seems like the sort that a dance writer more than another kind of critic would have, because dance often strikes us as the most unreal art. Denby himself says that dance is the most unreal art. His sentence presents the formalist's creed in a novel way. You have to agree with this point or disagree with it. You may find yourself more willing to accept it than you thought you would be.

OVER THE YEARS Denby's writing loses its edge. His later work will be of interest primarily to dance lovers. From the early fifties until the mid-sixties when he more or less stopped writing about dance altogether, Denby wanted primarily to record his impressions of Balanchine's development. A long section on this choreographer in *Dance Writings* is relatively tedious and a letdown. As Denby sees him, Balanchine embodies the ideas and ideals about dance and human behavior that Denby most believes in. Describing Balanchine's art, Denby might be describing his own values and his own writing style. Balanchine is the hero of the story that Denby tells in his reviews as a whole. Balanchine is the happy, brilliant, solidly pro-

essional, airy, and intuitive genius and ourtier that Denby's ideas lead toward.

In articles and notes on Balanchine up rough the early fifties, Denby is radi- ant, too. Balanchine's ballet *Cotillon*, Denby wrote in 1941 (to take one of any standout passages),

profoundly affected the imagination of the young people of my generation. It expressed in a curiously fugitive and juvenile movement the intimacy, the desolation, the heart's tenderness and savagery, which gave a brilliant unevenness to our beautifully man- nered charm. The thirties had not only a kind of Biedermeier paro- chialism, they had also insight into the eternity of a moment of grace. We are all out of them now, and it is strange to see now that what we then believed is still as true and absorbing in itself as any subsequent discovery.

he last sentence is Denby at his best; ou expect that he'll glide home in a mi- or key, but instead he delivers a flip rat makes you see a number of things ifferently.

There are solid perceptions and beau- ful descriptions here and there in Denby's work from the fifties and six- es. There's a serene piece on how to ook at Kabuki theater that you may ant to reread as soon as you have read . But Denby in general seems deplet- d, grayed. He gives us too much plain, traightforward description of stage ction.

As Denby aged, he seemed to want to ake his thoughts about dance and ovement into a wider terrain. He rites about stage movement and infor- al movement—a girl walking in a reet, a dog bounding in a field. These iter pieces have a philosophic, by-the- reside tone. One feels he's taking ance criticism to some wonderful, fully pened realm. Denby's "big" pieces ught to be the fulfillment of his criti- sm. But this writing is similar to Balan- hine's later art—that is, the Balanchine rat some of us first began to see in the arly seventies. Denby is fluid, but what ou are left with is a sort of restructuring f air. I think you have to be psyched up or the experience and that your relation o it is like that of an intellectual who is rapped up in baseball; you're as con- cious of yourself as an appreciator as ou are of the spectacle itself.

That Denby gradually lost his spindly ower doesn't dilute one's feeling for his ork in general. He belongs in the com- any of the many wonderful American

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Answers to the August Puzzles

"COORDINATION"

The two extraneous letters in each clue appear after the answer. 1. TOPS-I-DE (rev.); fn 2. YE(A)RNS (anag. + a); hz 3. G(A)RR(ETS); mt 4. G-HO-ST(L)Y; gs 5. CLO(U)DE(D due anag.); nc 6. AUR(OR)A; hu 7. G-ALL(ER)Y; ht 8. POLTERGEIST (anag.); cy 9. SPOO-N (oops rev.); pa 10. OL-FACTION; dr 11. CO(URT-SHIP (his urt anag.); qa 12. TEEMS (homo- phone); nk 13. HATCH (double def.); av 14. (or)PA-RIAH (hair anag.); hn 15. WHI- (LO)M; au 16. BIL(LI-ON-A)-IRE; oa 17. W(REATH)E (Thorea anag. minus o); ua 18. LAMINA-E (rev.); xa 19. MEANDER (hid- den); az 20. BOUDOIR (anag.); kt 21. TES-LA (rev.); ri 22. PO-MEG(RAN)-ATE; pb 23. OC- CU(L)T (anag. + l); an 24. NO(O)SE; ix 25. MAN-GE; iv 26. IC(ELAN)DER (cried anag.); we 27. O-BS(CUR)E; na 28. HE-CATE (acet anag.); fu 29. T(RACE)RY; gp 30. CO(RO)LLAR-IES; ln 31. T-AMPA (a map anag.); vc 32. R(EEL)ED; as 33. HY-GIENE (homophone); gq 34. ORCHESTRA (anag.); nj 35. L-INTY; nc 36. SPL-OTCH (LPs rev.); gn 37. FRE(I)GHT; td 38. HEY(D)AY (y ed anag.); mn

O	B	S	C	U	R	E	W	H	I	L	O	M
C	I	P	O	M	E	G	R	A	N	A	T	E
C	L	O	U	D	E	D	E	T	A	M	P	A
U	L	O	R	O	L	F	A	C	T	I	O	N
L	I	N	T	Y	E	R	T	H	I	N	L	D
T	O	P	S	I	D	E	H	E	C	A	T	E
S	N	T	H	Y	G	I	E	N	E	E	E	R
P	A	R	I	A	H	G	A	L	L	E	R	Y
L	I	A	P	T	O	H	U	M	A	N	G	E
O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A	N	O	E	A
T	E	E	M	S	T	B	O	U	D	O	I	R
C	O	R	O	L	L	A	R	I	E	S	S	N
H	E	Y	D	A	Y	G	A	R	R	E	T	S

ACROSTIC NO. 25

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—David T(hurston) Smith, *Thistledown*



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critics of the time: Jarrell, Greenberg, Blackmur, Agee, and the rest. Denby's voice is fainter and softer than theirs, but his subject doesn't lend itself to the same discussion of ideas and textures. He doesn't pretend that dance is another form of a Tolstoy novel. His criticism operates on the same set of rules as ballet or dance. His subject is a serious, thoughtless, youthful, perfect bodily expression. A great dance conveys a sense of unlimited and joyous physical power filtered through a great deal of unobvious training. Nijinsky's *Diary* is one of the best places to absorb, through the momentum of the words themselves, the way a dancer can feel superhuman strength coursing through a beautifully balanced body. Denby very often conveys the same clean strength. □

LABORS LOST

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE
OF LABOR: The Workplace, the
State, and American Labor
Activism, 1865-1925
by David Montgomery.

Cambridge University Press, \$27.95.

FOR SCHOLARS OF the left, American labor history poses one large and plaintive question: Why was the American working class so inept—at least by European standards—at shaping the history of its nation? Not only did the American working class fail to fulfill its Marxist mission of overthrowing capitalism and ushering in a new social order but it also neglected the more mundane tasks of organizing a labor party and creating a decent welfare state. Worse still, it seems to have lost its memory. In the past decade and a half good union men—men whose grandfathers may have sung the “Internationale” and taken up arms against soldiers and scabs—have voted, in appalling proportions, for “the party of the bosses.”

The conventional, centrist answer is that, one, there never was an American working class and, two, it got what it wanted anyway. In this account American workers never assembled themselves into a proper European-style class but remained an immiscible brew of ethnic groupings, each bent on its own agenda of upward mobility. If they neglected to transform society, it is be-

cause capitalism did that for them—eventually providing each sober, industrious workingman with a tract house, car, and a pension. And this account is true as far as it goes, although the tomb of the working people massacred at Ludlow, Colorado, at Homestead Pennsylvania, and in the Little Steel strike of 1937 suggest a very different answer: that there *was* an American working class in the hard-edged, Marxist sense; that it put up a good fight; and that it was beaten.

Just in the past decade or so a more complex and surprising picture has begun to emerge. Dozens of young scholars, many of them graduates of the movements of the sixties, have generated a huge and dauntingly detailed new body of empirical research into our working-class antecedents. A glance at my own bookshelves, which are by no means complete in this department shows recent studies of millworkers in Manchester, New Hampshire; Chicago meat-packers; Brooklyn longshoremen; West Virginia miners; early-nineteenth century New York factory “girls”; and metalworkers generally. Much of this new scholarship simply adds color and detail to Philip Foner's classic seven-volume labor history, but new themes have also opened up. For example, some of the recent social history highlights the role of the old working-class neighborhoods as incubators of class consciousness (and suggests, by implication, the decisive impact of the suburban diaspora of the 1950s and 1960s). Equally important, the new scholarship has begun to uncover the previously neglected “politics of the shop floor”: the decades-long struggle between workers and employers over *how* the work should be done, how fast it should be done, and who, in principle, had the right to decide.

David Montgomery—a Yale professor who is, incidentally, not a former student activist but a former machine-tender operator—both exemplifies and transcends the recent trend toward painstakingly detailed social history. For one thing, he has undertaken a far vaster project than most contemporary labor historians would attempt: American labor activism of all varieties and locales: from the time when American workers organized the first tentative but recognizable trade unions, in the mid-nineteenth century, to the emergence of the working class as an insurrectionary force during the first two decades of the twentieth century, to its humiliating defeat in

ie years following the First World War. ut, like a pointillist confronted with a ural-sized canvas, Montgomery fills in is story with minutely detailed cases: ie iron rollers of Columbus, Ohio; the ngshoremen of New Orleans; the fe- ale light-bulb assemblers of Toledo; id many more. The result may be the osest thing we have—in sweep, if not ways in daring—to E. P. Thompson's onumental book, *The Making of the nglish Working Class*.

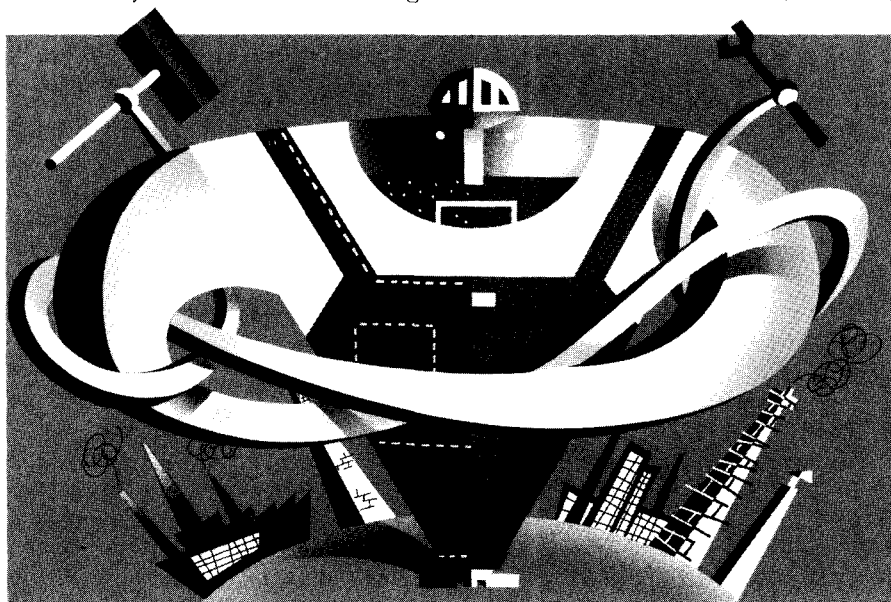
WAS THERE, IN FACT, anything that could be called an American work- g class in the Marxist sense—that is, a ocial grouping that occasionally per- ived and acted on its collective self-in- rest? Montgomery weighs his answer urefully. On the one hand, American dustry drew on a global labor supply— elsh miners, Chinese railroad workers, fro-American laborers, Slavic meat- ickers, Russian-Jewish factory opera- ves—and pressed it into an industrial erarchy headed by craftsmen of British id German descent. The latter, who so dominated the craft unions, never illy accepted the more recent immi- ants as brothers in the cause. Neither ie American Federation of Labor nor ie Socialist Party, which held the alle- ance of hundreds of thousands of orking people in the teens, ever con- ived of a “working class” that would clude the black woman laundry work- or the Chinese track-layer. At best, lack workers could join the festivities n Labor Day, but only if they were will- g to march at the end of the parade.

Yet again and again—in strikes from urtle Creek Valley, Pennsylvania, to awrence, Massachusetts, to bloody udlow, Colorado—America's polyglot ork force stood together. Hence Mont- omery's conclusion that “although it as made up of millions of individuals, ozens of nationalities and religions, veral races, and two sexes, the work- g class was a formidable fact of Ameri- n life.” It was, moreover, a class ani- ated by “a new desire . . . a sense indled by an unprecedented awareness f their ability to change the circum- ances of their lives. . . .” At its most idical, the American working class reamed not only of higher wages and orter hours but also of transferring ontrol of the factories to workers' coun- ls, the railroads to the railroad men, id “the mines to the miners.”

According to *The Fall of the House of abor*, that dream died for many rea-

sons—including the divisions within the working class and the increasing sophis- tication of employers at enlisting the power of the state. But, along with Da- vid F. Noble and other young labor his- torians, Montgomery locates a crucial battle on the shop floor. At one point American workers did, in a very real sense, control the factories. Skilled craftsmen understood the production process; their employers did not. So it was left to the craftsmen to organize the work, setting the pace of production at a level that would not push them to ex- haustion. As Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of scientific management, ob- served ruefully in 1911, in the nineteenth century “the shop was really run by the workmen, and not by the bosses.”

The story of how scientific manage-



ment, combined with the system of mass production, reduced the American working class to a race of machine- tenders and wrench-turners has been told many times, but Montgomery adds a new dialectical twist. Taylorism was in- troduced to break the power of the crafts and create a pliable, ignorant work force, but its effects, Montgomery says, were not so straightforward. For one thing, as Montgomery argues, the rule of the stopwatch and the slide rule meant that every step in the production process was measurable, hence negotia- ble and (with a union around) capable of becoming a grievance. In a sense, Tay- lorism did not resolve the old tensions over speed and quotas, it institutional- ized them.

Furthermore, the transition to a work force of machine-tending operatives had its own, unexpected costs for employ-

ers. Compared with craftsmen, opera- tives were expensive to train and re- place, precisely because they *were* ignorant of the production process. They were also hard to hold on to, be- cause, understandably, they lacked the “manly” pride in work that had charac- terized the artisan tradition. “The men do not value their jobs as they should,” an Elwood, Indiana, newspaper com- mented in 1913. “One man recently laid off for two weeks that he might go on a fishing trip. Others have stayed home for several days at a time that they might make a garden or help with the house cleaning.” It was in response to the growing fecklessness of the work force, Montgomery suggests, that employers undertook to control the minds as well as the bodies of their workers, launching

“Americanization” drives, promoting Prohibition (saloons being notorious centers of working-class sedition), spon- soring religious revivals, and develop- ing the techniques of manipulation we have come to know generically as “management.”

The tragedy, as the labor analyst Stan- ley Aronowitz has argued and Mont- gomery's work strongly suggests, was that the leadership of the working class was so unwilling or ill prepared to con- test the employing class on the issue of *power*. The craft unions narrowed their demands to wages and hours without seeming to notice that the crafts were being cut away from under them. And as the unions sought to enforce their end of the contract on a footloose working class, they, too, came to affirm the vir- tues of stability and “Americanization” over militance and class solidarity. The

result was not that the working class was "tamed" but that it came to accept the workplace as a dictatorship disconnected from American democracy: a place where the soul withers as the body tires, and where one dreams not of the coming utopia but of the end of the shift.

I WOULD HAVE LIKED Montgomery to be more forthcoming about his own conclusions, but, for all his modesty, *The Fall of the House of Labor* is a prophetic book. The story leaves off, in 1925, in a situation in some respects like today's:

with union membership declining, wages stagnating, and conservatism ascendant in the political realm. But the story was not over. In less than a decade labor had regrouped for the tremendous insurgencies of the thirties, when industrial workers by the tens of thousands once again struck, occupied factories, declared general strikes, and revived the dream of a better world. And perhaps this is the real answer to the mournful old question about the American working class: The story is not over yet. □

ters were a varied, articulate, sometime peppery group, and worth the research Ms. Taylor has devoted to them.

ORPHANS by Eileen Simpson. Weidenfeld Nicolson, \$16.95. Ms. Simpson and her only slightly older sister had lost both parents by the age of seven, and the care devolved upon relatives whose quarrels left the children stranded in grim Catholic orphanage. The author's description of her experience is moving without ever becoming maudlin. It reveals that in addition to loneliness and grief, the children suffered from a sense of dislocation and rootlessness, and from a mistrust of people and circumstance even pleasant ones, that led them to be automatically about everything. The autobiographical half of the book is so poignantly vivid that the later discussion of orphanhood in fiction and reality while intelligent and perceptive, becomes close to redundant.

TITANIC by Michael Davie. Knopf, \$19.95. By devoting his attention to the economic situation that inspired construction of the *Titanic*, to the official inquiries that followed her sinking, and to the machinery employed in the recent location and examination of the wreck, Michael Davie proves that, contrary to cynic expectation, there is real reason for another book about that hapless ship. His book is a good one.

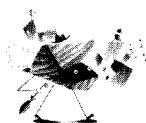
THE RAT by Günter Grass. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$17.95. In a series of what appear to be bad dreams, Mr. Grass foresees the self-destruction of the arrogant, greedy, stupid, pigheaded human race. The world is left to the rats, who, while regretting the loss of garbage dumps, manage to survive. As a diatribe against human folly, the book is comprehensive and passionate. As a novel, it suggests painting by Bosch—one admires the artist's fertility in the invention of grotesque monsters without feeling any personal commitment to their activities.

BLOODSONG AND OTHER STORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA by Ernst Havemann. Houghton Mifflin, \$13.95. Four of the stories in this collection appeared originally in *The Atlantic*.

THE AGE OF GRIEF by Jane Smiley. Knopf, \$15.95. Two of the stories in this collection first appeared in *The Atlantic*.

—Phoebe-Lou Adan

BRIEF REVIEWS

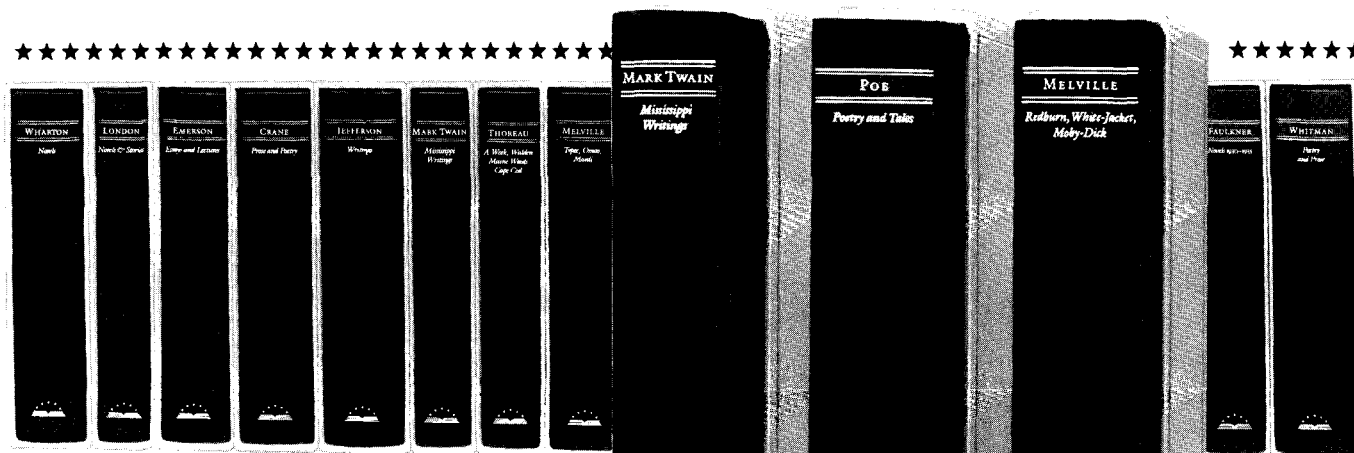


THE AUSTRALIANS by Ross Terrill. Simon & Schuster, \$19.95. Mr. Terrill begins his description of Australia with a reminiscence of his own boyhood in a small, isolated town where little attention was paid to events in the world at large. Returning to his country after years of study and work abroad, he considers the changes that have occurred since the Second World War. Immigration, much of it from Asia and Eastern Europe, has shaken the old British outpost-of-empire mentality, while business dealings with China and Japan have pulled the country closer to the Orient. The minute Aboriginal community has learned to bring lawsuits over land rights. Entrepreneurs of the north coast clamor for development and mining expansion, while conservationists of the south coast clamor for the protection of crocodiles. It is a lively scene, made more so by Mr. Terrill's habit of interviewing politicians in or out of office. Australian politicians have not yet mastered the American trick of uttering non-information in a geyser of governmentese. They speak to the point. They also publicly denounce each other as bastards and bandicoots. They are, like Mr. Terrill's book, enlightening and entertaining.

THE SILENT EXECUTIONER by Marcel Alain and Pierre Souvestre. Morrow, \$15.95. This is the second local appearance of the French master criminal Fantômas. The Fantômas thrillers began in 1911 and flourished for years. Their charm, if they have any, lies in lightning-fast action, tissue-paper characterization, a total

absence of plausibility, and the inability of the police to catch up with the elusive villain. These yarns have been described as works of surrealist art. They can also be viewed as Neanderthal forerunners of the Tin Tin, Boy Detective, cartoon books, which are just as fast, just as silly, and funny to boot.

VICTORIAN SISTERS by Ina Taylor. Adler & Adler, \$17.95. The Reverend George Macdonald (1805–1868) and his somewhat melancholy wife had five clever and beautiful daughters. One would expect the Macdonalds to have demanded Methodism and solvency in any suitors wooing their girls, but this was not the case. They cared only for good character and their daughters' pleasure, and made no objection when Georgiana and Agnes married impecunious young painters, nor when Alice married an art teacher of small prospects. They were unenthusiastic when Louisa accepted the heir to a manufacturing fortune. (Edith, who never married, described an old maid as "a woman who has missed much and escaped much.") Georgiana ended up as Lady Burne-Jones, and counteracted the title by preaching socialism to baffled Devonshire locals. Agnes became Lady Poynter and thoroughly enjoyed the position. Louisa was bored into invalidism by the Baldwin commercial set, but her son Stanley became Prime Minister. Alice accompanied John Kipling to India, which she hated on sight and forever, and there devoted herself to advancing the careers of her husband and their son, Rudyard. The Macdonald sis-



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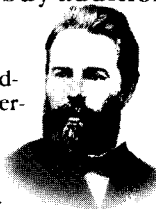


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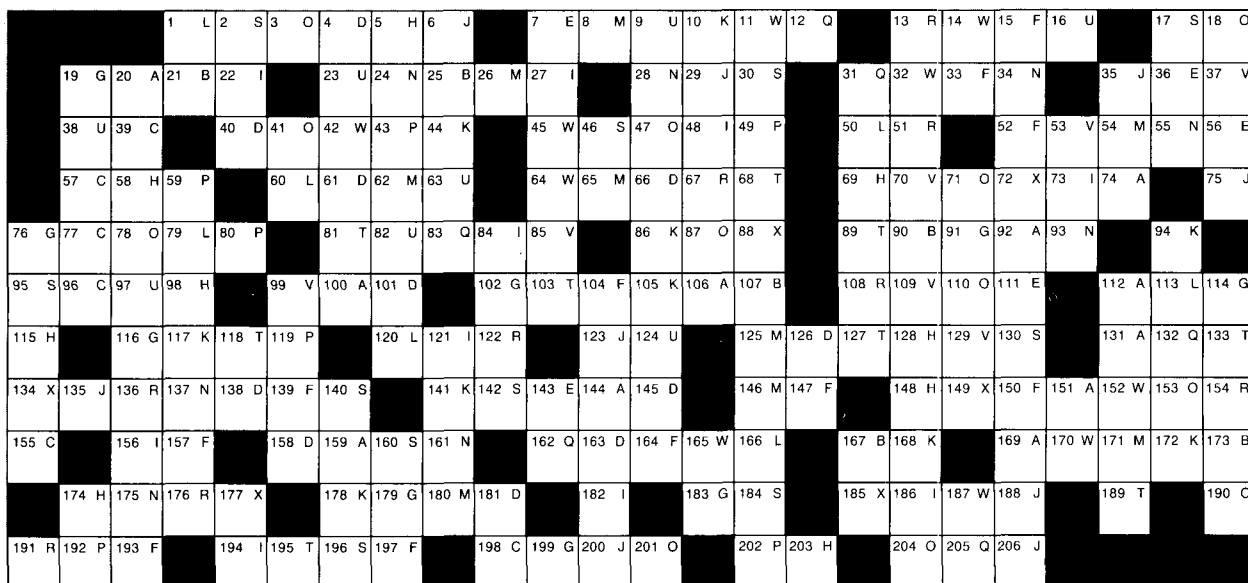
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ACROSTIC No. 26

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation. The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 25 appears on page 99.

A. State bird of New Hampshire (2 wds.)

92 159 131 20 74 144 169 112 106
151 100

B. Segregated urban area

107 90 21 173 167 25

C. Equivocated

57 155 198 39 190 96 77

D. Item found to have aesthetic value (2 wds.)

101 138 158 163 181 40 145 126 61
4 66

E. Florence-born poet

7 56 36 143 111

F. Cycle stuntman extraordinaire (2 wds.)

193 104 197 139 33 147 52 164 15
157 150

G. Risky situation (2 wds.)

102 76 183 179 199 114 91 116 19

H. French operetta composer

115 203 174 5 98 128 69 148 58

I. Texts sacred to Hindus

84 186 182 22 121 194 156 73 48 27

J. Sentimental do-gooder (2 wds.)

6 35 75 135 123 206 188 29 200

K. Developer of the passenger elevator (2 wds.)

44 141 105 10 117 172 168 86 94 178

L. Barkless breed of dog

60 120 166 79 113 1 50

M. Outlaw of legend (2 wds.)

26 171 125 146 62 65 8 180 54

N. Line on a meteorologist's map

55 24 161 28 34 175 137

O. 1983 Pulitzer Prize-winning play (2 wds.)

110 78 204 41 71 201 18 153 87
3 4

P. Site of King Minos' labyrinth

192 119 202 80 49 59 43

Q. Ancient Chinese philosopher (hyph.; var.)

31 205 83 12 162 132

R. Pitching niblick's modern name (2 wds.)

136 67 108 13 154 191 122 176 51

S. Warner Brothers cartoon cowboy (2 wds.)

130 184 30 140 95 46 17 2 160
142 19

T. South America's largest lake

127 103 68 133 89 81 118 189 195

U. One of the Three Holy Children

97 82 16 23 124 9 63 38

V. With ease, slangily (2 wds.)

53 109 70 99 37 129 85

W. Unwisely exposed (4 wds.)

187 152 64 42 11 14 170 32 165 4

X. King of Egypt's XX dynasty

72 149 177 134 88 185

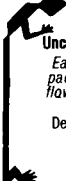
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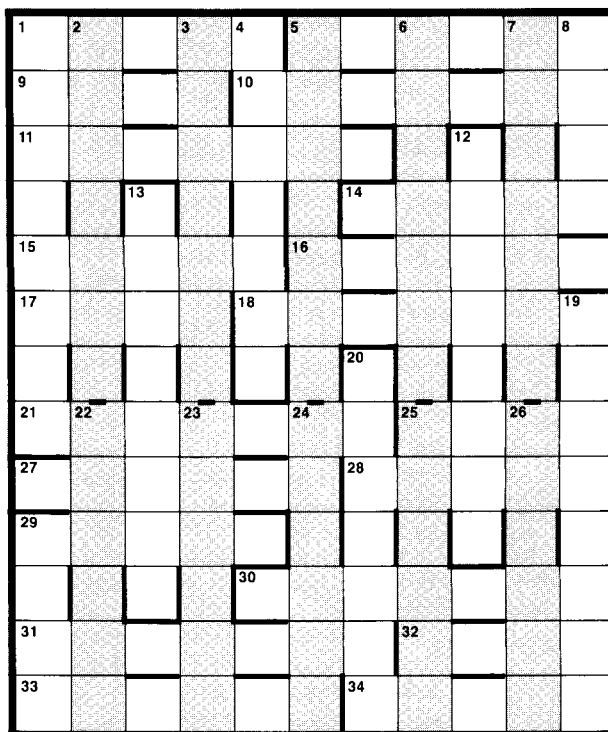
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THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

SUBTRACTION

All clue answers in this puzzle are to be entered normally in the diagram. In addition, there are five subtractions to be solved. These are given in the shaded columns, with words below the minus signs to be subtracted from the words above them. Solvers may get results by placing the remainders on the blanks below the equal-signs. Answers include two proper nouns.



The answers to last month's Puzzler appear on page 99.

ACROSS

1. Notes decreases (5)
5. Swamp vegetation covers ancient deity (6)
9. Split water (4)
0. Select a different instrument (7)
1. Tapes epic movie about legendary bird from the east (7)
4. Write about chic meeting place (5)
5. Artist's "Earthling and Alien" (5)
6. Have a meal including a float (6)
7. Masters in oral literature (4)
8. Race official has mediocre place to store equipment (7)
1. Back issue covering garage service cheat (7) (*hyphenated*)
5. Backsliding, share gin (4)
7. Foreign woman's impaired reason (6)
3. Top bit of carpet nap (5)

29. Be coy in attack, alternating with left and right (5)
30. Woodpecker's brief appearance (7)
31. Stars engulfing empty part of Indonesia (7)
32. Sharpen point in tool (4)
33. Under a sedative, somewhat wiped out (6)
34. Males carrying foot weights (5)

DOWN

1. Brush and stroke hussy (8)
2. Pull fish up on one side of the boat (7)
3. Squawk from pain in the neck, swallowing baloney (7)
4. Migratory charts containing coot's primary starting place (7)
5. What makes the ego insipid—a part of the brain (7)
6. Perfect hero cut capers (7)

7. Positions around street entrances (7)
8. Sailor's map collection, minus the first, turned up (4)
12. Fiddled with sign before entering football score (8)
13. Unexpected coming on of a horological device (8)
19. Shake pursuer with last of short bursts (8)
20. *To Kill a Mockingbird* actor is hot and irritable (7)
22. Construction worker's wife going with church official (6)
23. Cakes with a bit of rum put in packs (6)
24. One boarding farm animal, dead beat (6)
25. Broken-off stone stuck in the throat lozenge (6)
26. Expressed support for uprising (6)
29. Failing to score well on makeup (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

bubble *noun*, a room with transparent walls, typically located within another room, that is designed to be secure against electronic eavesdropping. "There were fears that perhaps other listening devices were placed in a supersecure *bubble* . . . where secret conversations can be held" (Reuters).

BACKGROUND: This sense of the noun *bubble* has gained wide currency as a result of the recent security breaches at the United States Embassy in Moscow. The term was previously used in connection with the 1986 Reykjavik summit meeting: "As soon as the party arrived at the U.S. Embassy, [Secretary of State George] Shultz said: 'Let's go to the *bubble*. . . .' The *bubble* was crammed so full of chairs that there was no room for a table" (*Newsweek*).

cocooning *noun*, retreating into the privacy of one's home during leisure time instead of traveling on vacations, dining out, attending the theater, or shopping in person, used as a means of insulating oneself from what is perceived as a harsh, unpredictable outside world. This socioeconomic trend is believed to represent an attempt by many people to gain more control over their lives: "At the moment, there's a trend . . . toward control. A part of that trend has a name: '*cocooning*.' It's very complex, but basically it involves building a shell of safety around yourself, so you're not at the mercy of the unpredictable world" (Faith Popcorn in *The New Yorker*).

Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of The American Heritage Dictionary, published by Houghton Mifflin. A new word that exhibits sustained use may eventually make its way into the dictionary. The information below represents the first stage of research, not the final product.

"The harassments of daily life—looming nuclear incineration, rude waiters—have driven people to *cocooning*. They have gone to ground in their dens . . . to keep at bay the modern world, the discontinuities of which have produced a longing for tradition" (George F. Will in the *Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: Early last year Faith Popcorn, the founder of BrainReserve, a Manhattan trend-analysis firm, identified as *cocooning* this new, yet-to-peak phenomenon, evidence for which includes soaring sales of VCRs and compact-disc players, increased popularity of Barcaloungers equipped with stereo headphones, an upsurge in home deliveries of takeout food, shopping by catalogue, a lack of interest in domestic and international travel, and a fascination with time management. A resurgence of appreciation for traditional values, also associated with *cocooning*, finds superficial expression in nostalgia for the 1950s—consider the renewed popularity of the convertible car, crinolines, and "Mom" food such as pot pies and meatloaf.

penturbia *noun*, an emerging region of growth and opportunity in the United States, consisting of small cities and towns, new subdivisions,

homesteads, and industrial and commercial districts interspersed with farms, forests, lakes, and rivers: "Long-run growth will be greater in *penturbia* than anywhere else in the nation. Look for *penturbia* beyond the normal commuting range of the nation's central cities" (*American Demographics*). BACKGROUND: *Penturbia* was coined by Jack Lessinger, a professor emeritus of real estate and urban development at the University of Washington, who first used the word in his book *Regions of Opportunity* (1986). Lessinger writes, "I call it *penturbia*, because it is the fifth [major migration] since the American revolution." Characteristically, *penturban* centers experienced below-average growth in the years 1950–1970 and above-average growth in the 1970s. *Penturbia* is peopled by a new kind of consumer, the "caring conservator," who seeks a simple yet somewhat cosmopolitan life-style and who rejects mass-consumption values.

Thucydides syndrome *noun*, a symptom complex that begins with influenza and develops into staphylococcal tracheitis, pneumonia, or toxic-shock syndrome, and that often results in death. "MacDonald et al and Sperber and Francis report the emergence (or re-emergence) of *Thucydides syn-*

drome. . . it now behoove physicians to be aware of this new entity and to consider quickly the diagnosis of TS [toxic-shock syndrome] in a patient with influenza whose condition suddenly worsens" (*Journal of the American Medical Association*).

BACKGROUND: In October of 1985 Alexander Langmuir, M.D., a former chief of epidemiology at the Centers for Disease Control, postulated in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that the catastrophic plague of Athens (430–427 B.C.), heretofore a medical mystery, and described in detail by Thucydides, was actually influenza complicated by a "toxin-producing strain of noninvasive staphylococcus." Langmuir, the coiner of this new eponym, also predicted that the syndrome might appear again, perhaps as an adjunct to a major flu epidemic. Shortly after Langmuir's article was published, patients exhibiting similar symptoms were seen in a Minnesota epidemic. The symptoms noted by Thucydides include high fever, hoarseness, coughing, sneezing, thirst, vomiting, blisters, amnesia, and peripheral gangrene. It is believed that the Athenians, having been debilitated by the influenza, succumbed to staphylococcal "superinfections" through small cuts or irritated nasal passage. Dr. Langmuir does not maintain that the plague reported by Thucydides was identical to toxic-shock syndrome as we know it; he does think that the "same basic pathogenetic mechanisms were involved."



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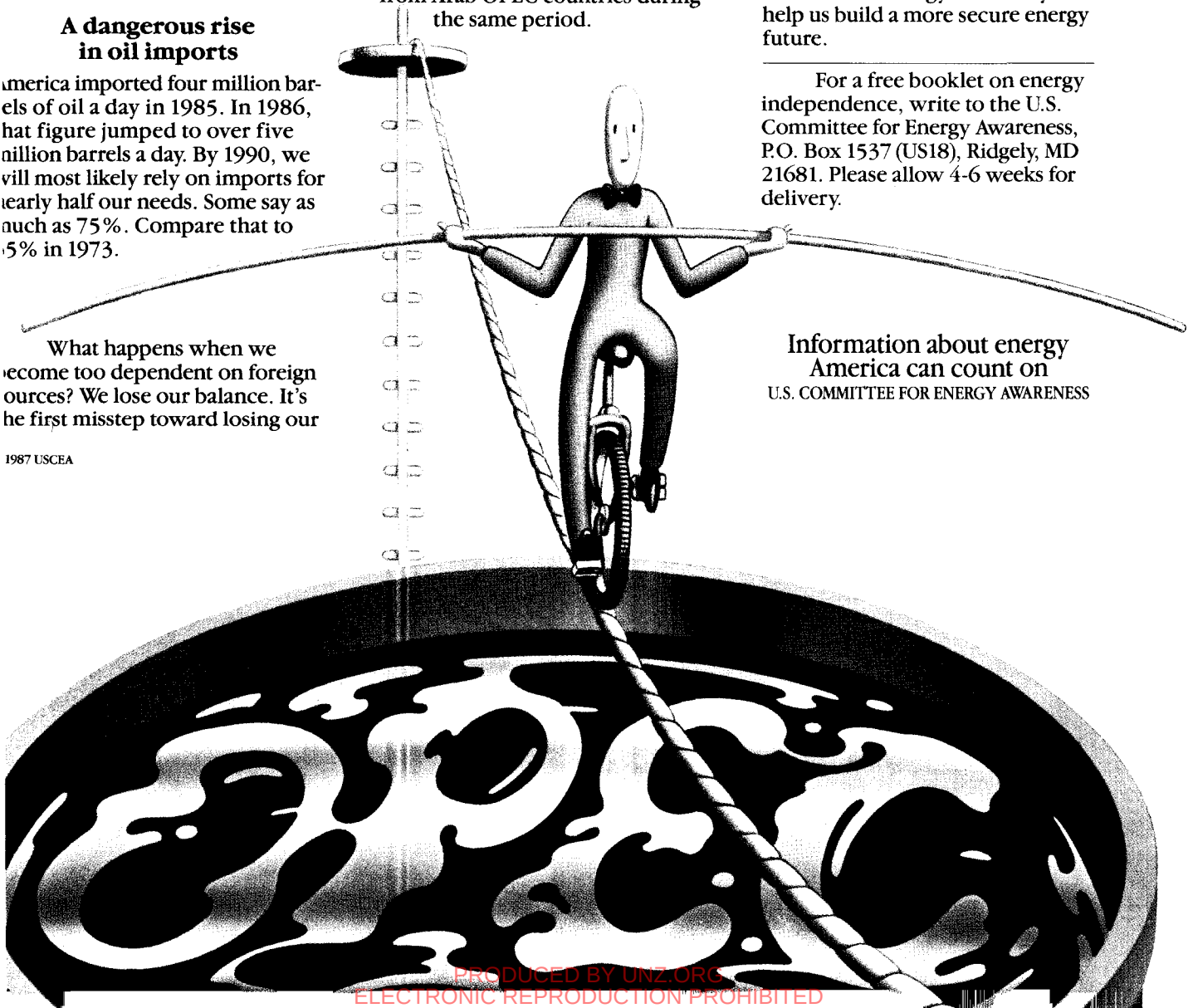
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